

PLUCK AND LUCK

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Price 5 Cents.

AT 12 O'CLOCK!

OR, THE MYSTERY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE.

A STORY OF THE REVOLUTION. *By GENL JAS A. GORDON.*



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CHAPTER I.

NED NOLAN.

The clock struck twelve.

Ned Nolan suddenly awoke, and then called:

"I say, friend, are you awake?"

There was no answer.

There was something awful in that continued silence.

On the narrow, high, old-fashioned mantel stood a candle, which Ned Nolan lost no time in lighting, his very blood running cold.

Holding the candle above his head he turned from the chimney-piece, and, facing the centre of the room, advanced a few steps, his eyes starting from their sockets in strained surprise; then he reeled back, throwing up his hands as if to ward off or drive back some dreadful thing confronting him; the candle at the same time fell to the floor with a crash and expired.

Ned Nolan could not repress a thrill of horror that swept him like a wave from head to foot.

For a minute or so he stood irresolute, waiting to fly the dreadful scene, yet rooted to the spot. At last, in a mechanical way, he sought on the floor the candle, and, as he lighted it again, muttered:

"Faith, it must be done; my own safety demands it."

It was a large, old-fashioned room in an old-time inn, and in each of the diametrically opposite corners stood a bed. One of these had been occupied by Ned, the other by a person to him a stranger, as he was a stranger himself.

Toward the latter bed Ned Nolan advanced, his face set and resolute, as if it required an effort to approach it. And

it did, after the faint glimpse he had caught of it before.

The flickering, fluttering, sickly flame of the candle cast a garish light over the bed and its surroundings.

Ned's face paled. There lay the man he had seen full of life and strength two hours before, dead, his head hanging over the edge of the bed.

Ned Nolan gazed at such a picture as this—not as described here, but in all its terrible reality—and he clasped his hand over his eyes as if the sight seared his brain.

How had this scene been enacted without his being awakened?

It was a mystery he could not explain.

And then a horrible thought crept into his mind—would he not be accused of committing this deed?

His cheeks grew paler still, and he thought:

"Worra, worra! has my bad luck followed me here to this country, too?"

What should he do? Should he give the alarm—or should he quickly steal away from the place? The latter seemed the best course, although it would be a tacit admission that he was guilty.

He took his hand from his heated brow, and his eyes discovered a bit of paper pinned to the dead man's breast.

Holding the candle closer he read:

"Thus perish all traitors to the cause of Liberty!"

He was greatly perplexed.

"Faith," he exclaimed, "whatever shall I do?" and stood irresolute and undetermined.

The question was settled for him by footsteps approaching, and then halting before his door, at which there came a low knock.

Ned crossed the room and opened the unlocked door, and

gave a visible start as he saw confronting him a man in the garb of one of his majesty's officers.

Stepping quickly back the young Irish lad placed his hand on the butt of a pistol, ready to draw it at any instant. The officer entered the room and had closed the door before he looked at Ned, and then he exclaimed:

"You're not the person Hi hexpected to see. Who hare you?"

But he waited for no reply, as chance had directed his gaze to the bed and its ghastly burden. Recoiling at the awful spectacle so suddenly presented, he gasped:

"Good God! What's this?"

Recovering himself he advanced to the bedside, and an angry, vexed cry immediately followed.

"Hit's Benson, the smuggler's hagent!" he exclaimed. "Did you do this?"

"No."

"Who hare you?" was the fierce demand.

"A stranger, arrived but this very day."

"Ah!" and the British officer fastened his eyes on the young Irish lad.

"What is your name?"

"Ned Nolan, before God and man!" was the proud reply.

The officer laughed hoarsely.

"Good henough!" he cried. "You will be kind henough to consider yourself ha prisoner."

"Not at all," said Ned, coolly.

"Surrender!"

"Not to ye, ye beef-eating minion of a bloody king!"

And he pulled out the pistol, and with a flourish warned off the officer, who, enraged at his words, had started savagely toward him.

"You shot hand, killed the Marquis of Kerry—ha good Henglishman, hand Hi harrest you for murder."

"I did shoot him," was the bold reply, "and I'll serve ye the same, ye dirty redcoat, if ye attempt to lay hands on me! Back, I say, or I'll shoot ye like a dog!" and Ned's eyes flashed with the fire of determination.

The officer retreated a few steps and then, with an evil smile of triumph hovering around his mouth, he shouted for help, adding:

"The king has hofferred ha reward for you hof five 'undred pounds, hand Hi'll pocket that—see hif Hi don't."

"Hurroo!" cried Ned. "Faith, that's an honor I never expected—to have a price put upon me head. But ye'll never claim it!" and, shoving his pistol back, he adopted the use of his fists, and suddenly darting upon the officer, struck him a sudden blow between the eyes, exclaiming: "Bedad, but I'll not be after wastin' powder and lead on the likes of such as ye! Ye're not worth it. Take that—and that—and that!" and at each "that" there was a spat, as Ned, dancing round, planted blow after blow on the officer's phiz. Mad as a bull at the sight of red cloth, the officer attempted to draw his sword, but this Ned forestalled by a sudden clip under the chin that floored him. Quick as a flash Ned planted a foot on the officer's breast, and, bending a little, spat squarely into the prostrate man's face, with the taunting remark:

"There, go tell your king that I have spat into the face of one of his officers, and wiped my dirty shoes on his body. Go tell him that, and tell him I defy him now and forever!"

The rush of feet along the hall warned Ned to fly, and, giving the officer a kick, he caught up his hat and coat, flew to the window, flung up the sash, and, with a mocking laugh, leaped into the darkness—he knew not whither. It chanced to be the street, and he took to his heels until, unable to run further, he came down to a walk.

"In trouble already," he muttered as he proceeded slowly toward the outskirts of Boston. "Faith, I must turn me back on this place."

CHAPTER II.

THE SMUGGLERS' RETREAT.

The date of the circumstances recorded in the preceding chapter was July 4, 1774, just two years prior to the day when the famous Declaration of Independence was given to the world.

The causes that led to that long and bloody war with the mother country had long been at work, and already noble old Massachusetts was suffering the penalty of her love for Liberty.

December 16, '73, the inhabitants of Boston rose against unjust taxation, and, dressed as Mohawk Indians, boarded English tea vessels and flung their cargoes into the bay.

From that time Boston's persecution commenced.

Four thousand British soldiers were stationed in Boston and billeted on the people. A family received an order, and forthwith came three or four redcoats, who took the best rooms in the house, ate at the table, and cursed the fare if it was not good enough, superciliously ordered the inmates around, and practiced many indignities on the fair daughters of America.

And the poor man whose family suffered thus could obtain no redress, and if he ventured to even murmur, was seized and hurried off to prison as a traitor to the king. Is it any wonder, then, that the handful of men who fought for and gained the freedom of our country adopted the motto, "Liberty or Death"?

Other punishment fell on refractory but Liberty-loving Boston.

On June 1, 1775, her harbor was closed by order of the king, supplies were cut off, and full many a family was plunged into the distresses of starvation.

But, God be praised, it was a blessing after all, for it fitted men to be soldiers—fitted them to endure the privations they afterward experienced during that glorious struggle.

Excitement ran high during that year in Boston, and many a conflict occurred in her streets, and many a man, timid before, there smelt gunpowder first, and acquired that contempt for it which makes the true soldier.

Boston was to be humbled—was to be starved into submission.

Bah! The English had undertaken what they could not accomplish, and day by day the British commandant had brought to his notice the fact that prohibited supplies had entered the city, and duty free at that.

His efforts to prevent this were scoffed at—jeered at, and his failure to prevent it was flaunted in his face; and with the characteristic rage of maddened John Bull, he cursed the smugglers and swore to draw and quarter any one of them that should ever fall into his hands.

But none ever did, and his curses, like chickens, must have come home to roost, for they never roosted anywhere else.

Several prominent men in Boston were suspected, among them Captain Gideon Arnow, but against them they could never find a vestige of proof, although smuggling went on day by day under their very noses.

They offered bribes to any one who would betray the smugglers, and at last they found a would-be traitor in the person of Benson.

A preliminary conversation had been held with him, and the British officer who suffered so much at the hands of Irish Ned had gone to see him that night to conclude a bargain for the betrayal of the home of the smugglers.

But an avenging hand had struck him down in secret, and on the brink of success the British were balked.

Captain Gid Arnow smiled significantly when he heard the next day the rumor of Benson's mysterious, violent death. Had he chosen, he could have given a good guess as to who had struck the fatal blow, although he had no knowledge that it was contemplated.

British spies tracked him all day long, but he affected to be unconscious of it, though he knew it well. And he was dogged whenever he went into the street, for a week afterward, and then, finding their vigilance unrewarded they relaxed their unsolicited attention.

"Ha! ha!" laughed bluff Captain Gid. "I'll give you the slip to-night, my boys!" and studying up some new problem, he wended his way homeward and went at once to his study, where he remained until the supper-bell rang.

He found his wife and daughter in the dining-room before him. Mrs. Arnow was a slight and pale, but evidently high-spirited woman, and Stella Arnow, the daughter, evidently partook largely of her mother's spirit as well as of the high degree of bravery which rumor accorded Captain Gid.

"You're going to the island to-night, are you not, father?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Can I go with you?"

"I'd rather you'd stay home. What does mother say?"

"Stella can do as she wishes," replied Mrs. Arnow.

"Then she shall go," said Captain Gid, and when he had finished his meal, lighted his pipe and puffed away in silence for some time.

At ten o'clock every light in the house was extinguished, to mislead any spy into the belief that they had all retired.

Stella and her father were all ready for their midnight excursion, but they did not attempt to leave the house until some time after eleven o'clock.

Winding their way through the darkest and narrowest streets, they finally stopped before a tumble-down house that stood by the water's edge. A dim light could be seen faintly through a chink in the shutter, and Captain Gid gave a satisfied grunt.

Advancing, he gave three low raps, twice repeated, on the door, which, being opened slightly, a low voice asked:

"Why do you knock here? What's the time of night?"

"Twelve o'clock."

"And——"

"All's well."

The door was now opened sufficiently to admit the passage of Captain Gid and Stella, after which, being closed, they found themselves in a sort of a dark closet, so arranged that the light in the room would not shine forth into the night when the outer door was opened.

They entered the inner room, but only paused there a minute. The man who had let them in seemed to know what was wanted of him, and taking up a candle, crossed the apartment and disappeared through another door. Captain Gid and Stella followed their guide, who, finally setting down the candle behind a screen, raised a door in the floor and they could hear and see the faint glimmer of water beneath.

A boat that was hung near the ceiling was let down noiselessly into the water by a well-oiled tackle, and into it Captain Gid and Stella descended, and a moment later they were skimming like a dark shadow over the surface of the bay.

Soon they were abreast of Castle Island, and could see the frowning ramparts of the fort towering up, grim and stern-looking.

Pulling steadily onward Captain Gid finally slightly changed his course, and made for one of the chain of rocky islands that extended north and west of Boston Lighthouse.

His muffled oars gave out no sound as they worked in the rowlocks, and it showed how watchful a sentry must have

been stationed there, for the boat's prow had not ceased grating on the shaly beach before a low voice called:

"Give me the time."

"Twelve o'clock!"

"And——"

"All's well."

They could hear the hammer of a gun being let down, and then a low voice asked:

"Is that you, Captain Gid?"

"Yes."

"We've been expectin' of you two or three days. How goes things in Boston?"

"As usual," replied Captain Gid. "Take care of the boat till I return."

"All right, sir," was the reply, and the fellow politely touched his cap, for he knew that that muffled figure that was with the captain was his daughter.

They went up a steep ascent by a rocky, uneven path. After fifteen minutes' hard climbing they made a sharp descent of a few feet, rounded an abrupt corner of rock, and saw before them a low, smoldering fire, around which twenty-five men were congregated, some asleep, some awake and talking or smoking, while one little group was amusing itself with a pack of cards.

They arose as the pair approached them, and saluted them respectfully, and then, advancing, shook hands all around with brave Captain Gid, who was shortly asked for the news in Boston, the all-absorbing topic of the time.

The sleeping ones awoke, and crowded around to hear the news—a part of which was Benson's death, at hearing of which several muttered that they had always suspected the fellow.

"And now," said Captain Gid, "who is absent to-night?"

"Oscian, the half-breed, and Pete Slick."

"Is Slick absent?" quickly said Captain Gid.

"Yes—he's been away the last three days."

The captain looked grave, and remained silent for some minutes, as if in thought.

Finally, turning his attention to the waiting men, he said:

"Well, boys, see that no more of you leave, for we have work on hand for the night after to-morrow."

A murmur of approval ran from lip to lip.

"The smack will arrive about midnight outside the lighthouse. Be there with two crews ready to unload her. I'll go from here with you or meet you there."

After drawing from his huge pockets letters for a number of the men—tobacco for this one, and various little packets for others, he and Stella returned by the path they had come, entered the boat, bade the sentinel good-night, and were noiselessly swallowed up in the darkness that overhung the bay.

They had been gone but half an hour or so, when another small boat approached the island.

The password was given all right, and the watchful guard allowed the boat to land, after which it was drawn up and hidden from sight in a cleft in the rocks, and after saluting, the trio who had just landed climbed the rocky path and entered the smugglers' retreat.

"Oscian! Pierre! Good-evening to you!" was heard on all sides. "But who is this you have with you?" was asked in all quarters, and two dozen pairs of curious eyes scanned the stranger.

"It is a new recruit—Ned Nolan."

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE.

Captain Burton, the British officer, leaped to his feet when the Irish lad sprang from the window, frothing at the mouth and choking with impotent rage.

The landlord—a true adherent of the king, which fact, if known by the young Irish refugee, would have deterred his putting up at the inn—accompanied with others of the same stripe, heard the captain's cry as they were hobnobbing in the bar, and rushed to the rescue.

"What's the matter, mon?" asked the innkeeper, in his broad English. "What 'as 'appened o' ye?"

Burton's choking anger prevented an immediate reply, but seeing a pistol in the hands of one, he snatched it as soon as he recovered powers of locomotion, jumped to the window, and fired at a dark object some feet away, forgetting that by this time the object of his wrath must be at least several blocks away.

Just then one of the party discovered the body of the dead man, and they gathered around it, too horrified for speech.

"The deuce!" hissed Burton. "The Irish 'ound 'as hesaped. Look hafter the body, you!" to the landlord, and he bounded from the room, clattered down the stairs and burst into the street.

He shortly met half a dozen soldiers, who, on parol through the streets, were leisurely going to learn the cause of the shot; for supposing this to be like many another outrage—merely some poor fellow shot by a soldier—they did not wish to arrive until the culprit had made good his escape.

As coherently as his excited condition would allow, Burton gave a description of Ned, and one of the patrol remembered that while sitting on a barrel smoking a cigar he had seen just such a person saunter past him.

"That's the fellow!" cried Burton. "Hafter 'im, men, hand ha guinea to the man what takes 'im!"

In an instant they were off like a pack of bloodhounds, led by the soldier who had seen him, the captain among those who followed.

Ned Nolan was walking quietly along when he heard the heavy tramp of feet behind him.

"I am pursued," he muttered. "Well, they've got to be sharper than weasels to take me, that's all."

And he started onward at a easy jog trot.

"Help!"

Suddenly the cry rang out, and was distinct and clear above the tramp of heavy feet.

"It's not me they're afther at all," thought Ned, coming to a dead halt. "It's some other poor divil. I'll wait and give him a hand."

Usually as keen-witted as a fox, for once the Irish lad was fooled. It was but a frequently practiced ruse at the time, for the British knew that such a cry would always cause the fugitive to think he was mistaken as regarded himself, while the person, if at all high-spirited, would stop to help the brother he imagined to be in distress.

Ned never discovered his mistake until the redcoats were within twenty feet, and the leaden bullets were whizzing about his ears.

"Ye dirty serpents!" he exclaimed, his Irish anger now aroused up fully. "Take that in your skillet, some o' ye!" and he pulled the trigger of his pistol.

A sharp crack, and then came a cry of pain and a heavy fall.

"Ha!" he snarled, drawing his lip up, "how do ye like that? This for you!" and he flung his now useless pistol forcibly into the face of a redcoat who was just in the act of seizing him. The heavy weapon, flung by the muscular hand of the refugee, split the soldier's nose, broke off all of the teeth it struck, and knocked him down.

"Ned Nolan's me name!" he cried, defiantly. "When ye catch me let me know," and away he dashed, the captain and the sound members of the party pursuing, yelling like a pack of hounds.

Ned laughed in his sleeve, for he was able to outrun them all, and with very little exertion managed to keep ahead; but his laugh was changed when he suddenly found his way blocked up by a house, which, standing at the head of a street, caused its termination. He could not turn back; he was in a trap.

He saw all this at a glance, but he had no thought of giving up even then, but clenching his fists until they were as hard as stones, he waited the onslaught.

In a minute he was head over heels in business, and soon floored two of his antagonists. By a lucky accident two others made a mistake on account of the darkness, and each worked away vigorously on the other.

Just then Ned felt a firm grip on his wrist and a low:

"Hist!" reached his ears, and he was noiselessly drawn through an open door. His strange friend led him along a hall, into and through several yards, and so into another street.

"What had you done?" his companion asked.

"Nothing."

"You don't belong here."

"No. I'm from Portland this very day."

"Ah!"

"Yes, and these fellows wanted to get me back to get me hung. Begorra, it don't look much like it now," he said, good-humoredly. "Thanks to ye, me friend."

"Will you trust yourself with me?"

"To be sure I will. Haven't you done me a good turn, and if I don't do the same for ye some day me name's not Ned Nolan, that's all."

They hurried along, and Ned was led into a house and into a lighted room, when he saw that his friend was a tall, slender individual, with a face as smooth as a woman's, and of a dark shade of complexion.

"Frinch, I take it?" said Ned.

The stranger turned and added:

"By birth only; I am an American."

The door opened and another person entered. He was darker than the first, heavier built, with a few curly, straggling hairs on his face, which was nearly as dark as an Indian's.

"Is it done?"

The newcomer drew his finger across his throat. It was his only reply, and as the motion was made Ned Nolan thought of the dead man, and instantly jumped at the conclusion that this was the man who had committed the deed, but he said nothing.

"My name is Oscian," said his friend. "This is Pierre."

Ned bowed and shook hands with both of them.

"You say your life is in danger?"

"Yes."

"And do you hate England?"

"As bad as St. Patrick did the snakes and toads he banished from Ireland."

"Would you like to strike a blow against the proud king?"

"Faith, I would."

"It shall be in your power to do so," said Oscian, and then he unfolded the story of the smugglers with whom he was connected.

Needless to say, Ned jumped at the offer of joining them.

He remained housed up for some days, as Pierre had business on hand of some secret nature, and then one night made his entrance on the island as mentioned.

Pierre's black eyes flashed from man to man in the group, and one whispered to another:

"There's mischief in the halfbreed's mind."

Pierre was indeed a halfbreed, of an Indian mother by a French father, while Oscian was his half-brother, born of his father's French wife.

"Is Slick here?" asked Pierre.

"No."

He said no more, but squatting down before the fire, began contemplating it with a moody air.

Presently footsteps were heard, and a man glided into their midst from the outward darkness.

A grim look and smile lighted up Pierre's features, and walking up to the newcomer he seized him by the wrists, exclaiming:

"Slick, you are a traitor!"

A bombshell dropped in their midst could not have occasioned more surprise than these words; the accused man turned pale as a sheet, and murmured some faltering reply that it was not so.

"You lie!" said Pierre, fiercely. "Last night, at one o'clock, you made a bargain with Captain Burton to betray us, and agreed to lead his men to our retreat to-morrow night. You came here to-night, as I knew you would do, to see if we will be at home to receive them as hosts should always do."

"It is false!" gasped the accused man, his knees knocking together with fright.

"I'll prove it," said Pierre, sternly. "Captain Burton gave you an order for money, so worded that you are only to get it if we are captured, and not until then. That paper is on your person; Oscian, search him."

In his vest-pocket was found the proof of his treachery. Now overwhelmed, the wretch went down on his knees and piteously begged for mercy.

"Aye, you hound! such mercy as you would have shown in putting us in prison to rot to death. Come!" and Pierre dragged him to his feet, and, with a rope which was brought, bound his hands.

"Come with me!" he said, and dragging Slick with him, approached a spot where from the bluff above the rock went sheer down to the water.

Those gathered around the fire said no word, but looked at each other. Presently came a report, a shrill cry, a splash at the foot of the bluff, and then in a few minutes Pierre glided noiselessly among them, his face as calm and settled as a child's, bearing nothing to indicate the hand he had taken in the recent tragedy.

* * * * *

There was some mystery about the Boston Lighthouse, and the subject was on everybody's lips.

A British bark was off the coast one night with the light in plain sight. Eight bells (midnight) had just struck, when of a sudden the light disappeared, nor did they see it again all night long, and were compelled to lay to until daylight before entering the harbor.

The light-keeper was interrogated when the ship's captain told the strange story, but he stoutly persisted that such was not the case; and in this he was corroborated by divers people on Castle Island, who swore that the light had been plainly visible all night long.

In less than two weeks the same thing happened again, and again were the witnesses on each side as positive as before.

The light-keeper was a trustworthy man in every respect, but the British commander, to test these strange affairs, put with him another man.

With two in the lighthouse the same thing happened.

And what made it more strange was that each time this happened there seemed to be a fresh influx of contraband goods into Boston. In vain the English strove to connect these circumstances, the game being too deep for them to see through.

Still a third man, an officer, was placed in the lighthouse.

The trio were gathered in the lantern smoking and talking on the second night after Slick's plunge into eternity. The

night wore away and the hour of twelve was fast approaching, when a scene was enacted not unlike those told in fairy tales.

The eyes of three men began to grow heavy and the lids drooped in sympathy. Each looked in a dazed way at his companions, and seeing them in the same condition, sought to rouse himself; but this they could not do, for a fatal spell seemed to be upon them. A quietness almost supernatural hung around the place, broken simultaneously by three indistinct sighs, and the three men occupied, with strong rigidity, the respective positions in which the spell had overtaken them.

The storm-door opened and a slender, lithe figure glided in; it was Oscian.

Taking off a cloak, he screened the light in such a way that it could not be seen out at sea, although visible to all inside the harbor.

He sat on the stool between the three men, while minutes dragged out into hours, the while making a peculiar humming noise something in sound like that made by a cat.

Suddenly he arose, resumed his cloak and passed outside, and a few minutes later the men were awake, and one completed a sentence which had been broken by the spell stealing over him.

That same night, not long before Oscian entered the lantern of the lighthouse, a small boat darted up to Smugglers' Island.

It was Stella Arnow.

"I am to guide you," she simply said to the smuggler lieutenant. "Father can't come, but I know the harbor as well."

Her own boat she left in care of the sentry, and took a seat in one of the large, heavy boats they used in unloading the smack outside of the lighthouse, as they dared not bring a sailing vessel inside for fear of discovery.

Their course lay over a shallow stretch of water, deep enough in all parts to float the boats when empty, but needing a good guide and a thorough knowledge of the bottom to prevent grounding hard and fast when loaded.

Outside the light they found the smack laid to, and in a few minutes the long boats were laid beside her. Then ensued a scene of great activity, yet almost noiseless; the heavy casks and boxes and bundles were transferred with so little noise that a person ten hundred feet away, dependent on his ears, would not have known that it was transpiring.

The boats were loaded, the good-byes were said, the smack stood out to sea once more—while the smugglers, with such piles of things around them that hardly elbow room was left, pulled slowly past the lighthouse and made toward Castle Island, under whose very guns, almost, they were accustomed to run.

The water was growing shallow.

Up rose Stella from her seat in the bow of the boat, and when she dropped from her shoulders the long, black cloak she wore, it revealed her in a dress evidently made for balls and parties. It showed to perfection her splendid figure, and flowed behind as gracefully as artistic drapery.

She faced the stern of the boat, but although the coxswain saw only her back, he knew what she meant when her slender hands moved up or down, or this way or that.

It was growing late, and the blackness of night would soon give way to the approach of day.

Objects could be seen at some distance, and all held their breath as they approached Castle Island, fearing discovery by the sentinels in the fort.

Would they get past in safety?

They fancied not, yet they would not be weaker than the woman in the bow of the leading boat, who, firm and erect,

composed as a statue, only differed from one when the extended, supple arms were gracefully moved up or down.

They were opposite the fort.

A musket's report broke the stillness, and then a brazen-toned bell sounded forth its warning; they were discovered!

Not a muscle moved Stella Arnow, except to brush off her hat and allow it to fall at her feet. Then she remained passive and motionless, but for the moving of her guiding hands.

Loud shouts and cries, and then broke forth the thunder of cannon. Great streams of flame leaped forth from the iron throats of the cannon that frowned from the battlement, huge clouds of sulphurous smoke rolled upward, and a cannon ball plowed up the water a few feet in front of the boat.

With no show of fear the heroine stood there, and midst shot and shell guided the smugglers onward.

CHAPTER IV.

A TOUGH PLAN.

The cannon boomed sullenly, jets of flame jumped forth from their black throats, and deadly missiles hurtled and whizzed through the air; and though none but brave hearts were within the smugglers' boats, none could repress a start or a shake of the head when a ball struck the water not half a dozen feet in front of the foremost boat's prow, and then went ricocheting for some distance ere it sank.

We made a slight mistake when we said none could repress a start, for there was one that remained as immovable as a statue; it was the lithe, white-robed figure in the bow.

Stella Arnow, if she felt fear, at least showed no sign of it, never forgot herself, and, as if she had not heard the roar of the guns or seen the balls striking dangerously near, moved her extended arms slowly up and down, their movement as graceful and easy as ever, no faster, no slower than before the discovery.

Once only she quickly turned her head and flashed her eye toward the fort, taking in with that transitory glance the frowning walls, the thundering guns, the puffs of flame and smoke, the excited crowd rushing to the boats, the sentry with musket on his shoulder pacing the parapet.

Splash!

A ten-pounder struck the surface near by, and plunging down, sent flying a dense spray which drenched all in the boat, and caused many a one to gasp for breath and half drop his oar.

"Steady!"

It was Stella Arnow who said this, and in a voice as quiet and collected as though she were in her father's parlor, making some commonplace remark.

The men seized their oars with firmer grasp and settled themselves in their seats; they could not and would not allow themselves to show fear when a woman in their midst could be so cool and quiet.

"Pull sharper!" she called, and the men bent closer to their work.

The second boat kept close up, and in a few minutes both were out of the line of range of the heavy guns of the fort, and the danger of being sunk by any chance shot was left behind.

But a greater danger menaced them in the form of the soldiers who had hastily embarked in the small boats belonging to the fort. Loaded with armed men, with no weight but themselves, they could progress more rapidly through the water than the heavily-laden boats of the smugglers, and so from the moment of starting they began to close up the space.

Stella knew all this, and in low tones she encouraged the

smugglers to do their best, while with close calculation she shortened distances by guiding them over shallow places when there often was no more than an inch or two of water to spare, and again led them through narrow channels where frowning water dogs projected their slimy heads not more than five feet from either side.

"They're gaining fast!" called the coxswain, after a fleeting glance in the rear.

"Never mind them," said Stella, sharply, without turning her head. "Watch me!"

The rebuked coxswain became silent and did as he had been bidden, and Stella, seemingly as devoid of emotion as a piece of marble, guided them onward, nor turned her head until a musket-ball went whistling over their heads and she heard the report. Then she looked back and saw that the soldiers were within shooting distance and that the men were moving uneasily in their seats.

Crack!

Another bullet went whistling past. It was an order to halt, but Stella paid no attention whatever to it.

Nearer and nearer the redcoats drew, and the men began to murmur among themselves.

"Hist!" said Stella. "Quick! It will be a tough pull for you, but they can never catch us."

Once more the men became silent, and bent to their oars with a new energy.

Crack—crack—crack!

Only a signal, but a very peremptory one, and Stella well knew that the next time those muskets spoke it might be to a purpose. It might speak in tones of death to some of her men.

She could hear the voice of the officer in the leading boat calling to her to stop, and a scornful smile wreathed her lips.

Crack—crack—crack!

A low cry, and she saw one of the men drop his oar and fall into the bottom of the boat. The smugglers were now fully aroused, and in less than ten seconds after their companion's fall a dozen muskets were raised to avenge it.

"Stop!" cried Stella. "Are you fools? They are too strong for us. What we do must be done by superior skill. To the oars and pull as you never pulled before."

Instinctively they knew that she was right, and without an instant's hesitation they dropped the muskets, took the oars and tugged at them until the strong muscles stood out on their arms in knotted bunches, and the oar blades bent near to breaking. They pulled as indeed they had never pulled before.

Once more Stella's back was to the men, and her face was turned ahead and her arms were gracefully directing the course, while the musket reports rang out sharp and fast and bullets whizzed and hissed and splashed in the water around.

The heavy boats almost leaped through the water when Stella suddenly called for greater speed.

"Faster!" she cried. "Faster for just a minute—look out—pull sharp—sharper yet"—a long, sullen, grinding noise—"another good, strong pull—another; we're dragging on bottom—another—we're off—easier now until we see how the other boat does."

The second boat was following the tactics of the first in every respect, and met with the same experience. When Stella saw that they were safely over, she cried:

"Give way again now, lively, and we're safe! The British can never get over that spot, for I crossed the deepest part of it."

Encouraged by her words, the men gave way again right royally, keeping their eyes fixed on the pursuing boats, and they gave a lusty cheer when of a sudden they saw the boat fetch up sharp and the rowers tumble headlong backward, and they cheered again as they saw another boat suffer the

same fate, and as a third fetched up on the rocky ridge they whipped off their hats and swung them around their heads, and gave the pursuers the "tiger."

"Lose no time," said Stella. "They may drag their boats across and continue the pursuit."

Indeed this was what the officer at once caused his men to do. As soon as they could scramble to their feet he made them leap out and drag the boat across the bar; but when the soldiers piled into their places the boat suddenly filled and the weight of the firearms sunk her in the deep water beside the bar, and left her occupants struggling for life. The second boat had also had her bows smashed by coming in contact with the barrier of rock, and sunk when she came to the assistance of the other. The third boat was over by this time, and by good fortune saved those who had reached the rock and stood on it knee-deep in water, shivering in the night air.

At a glance the officer saw how useless it would be to continue the pursuit, and sullenly gave the order to drag the boat back across the bar again and return to the fort. He was savage in his manner, for he could hear continually ringing in his ears the taunting cheers of the escaping smugglers, and besides that he had caught a glimpse of his rueful-looking self, and knew that his suit was spoiled.

And as the smugglers slowly disappeared in the distance the last they saw of the soldiers was as they were drawing the boat across the bar, and a smile rested on Stella Arnow's face as she thought:

"I wonder how the bull-dogs will like this?"

Carefully she guided them across the remaining shallow water, and then resuming her cloak and hat, sat quietly in the bow until the sentry had challenged and received the countersign and the boats had grated on the beach. Then springing out she entered the light boat she had come in and soon was lost in the hazy darkness of early morning as she pulled away to the mainland.

Choosing the least frequented streets, and making a detour, she entered her father's house by a back way. Her knock at the door speedily answered, and she was caught in the arms of Captain Gid.

"I see by your face that you have been successful," he said.

"Yes," was the reply. "Was my absence noticeable?"

"It was remarked upon," was her father's reply. "Captain Burton wished to know what became of you after dinner, and I told him that you had gone to your room with a headache."

"We had a pretty close shave, though," said Stella.

"What was it?" asked Captain Gid, anxiously, in reply to which question Stella gave him a brief outline of what occurred.

"Poor Jonathan! was he hurt much?" asked Captain Gid, when Stella told him of the chance shot.

"No; at first we thought he was killed, for he fell backward with a scream; but the bullet only plowed up his shoulder; it was a narrow escape, though," said Stella. "But now I must go to bed and get some sleep, for I've an engagement to go out riding with Captain Burton this afternoon."

Captain Gid went back to his private room, and sat down in his easy-chair, where he remained for a long while, smiling and rubbing his hands.

"Egad! Stella's a trump!" he exclaimed. "I little thought when she was a little quizzing minx that the knowledge she got out of me about the harbor bottom would ever be used to such good purpose. Ha! ha! it couldn't have happened better, for this will tend to quiet the suspicions against me, which might impair my usefulness if it wasn't hushed up.

And Captain Burton—ha! ha!—it's rich!" and he nodded his head sagaciously.

Captain Burton, with whom our readers are acquainted, had chanced to see Stella on the street one day, and had at once sought her father out and obtained an introduction, which led to his being invited to the house. Captain Gid shrewdly sought to be on good terms with Burton for the effect it would have; so Burton had kept calling at different times, bringing with him other officers connected with the British army; the evening before Burton had dropped in with Colonel Brower, his superior officer, and three other officers, much to Captain Gid's dismay, for he wished to go to the island that night. This, of course, he dared not now do, and he was left in a quandary, which, however, his visitors saw no trace of, for he was more bland and agreeable than ever, and presided at the dinner table as if he were not in his heart wishing his visitors buried a thousand fathoms beneath the sea.

After dinner Stella beckoned her father out, and after a few minutes' of conversation Captain Gid entered the parlor smiling; but Stella did not reappear, although her mother, a younger sister, and a cousin from near by, came in to entertain the visitors; but Burton was gloomy, for Stella was the attraction to him, and he learned from her father that she would not be visible again that evening.

He roamed around the parlor a while, and then played whist with Captain Gid, while his companions chatted with the ladies. As the clock struck twelve he rose and sauntered to the window, giving the colonel a nudge as he passed, to intimate that it was time to go; and then, with a yawn, he remarked:

"The lighthouse is visible from here, I see, Captain Gid?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"There's something strange in that story about its going out at midnight, isn't there?"

"There is, for a truth," said Captain Gid.

"I can't understand," put in the colonel. "It's after twelve now, but I can swear it's burning now, can't you?"

"I'll take an oath it is," said Burton, confidently; "can't you, Captain Arnow?" he asked, looking at him just too late to see a queer smile that had been playing about the captain's mouth.

"It's plain enough to be seen from here," said Captain Gid, but neither of them noticed the slight stress he placed on the last word, and then he bade them good-night and had a nap of several hours in a chair before he began to look for Stella's return.

His visitors were ready to swear they saw the light at midnight and after; what, then, was their astonishment, when, the next day, the captain of a newly-arrived British ship, with munitions of war, swore that it had not been visible at that time.

CHAPTER V.

THE CROWN DETECTIVE.

The story told by the captain of the British man-of-war's man was that he had arrived nearly abreast of the lighthouse. After cruising around an hour or more he put out to sea again, not daring to venture entering the harbor in the darkness, nor yet to lay to in such dangerous proximity to the coast.

An aide-de-camp of the general commanding was at once sent off to the lighthouse, but his trip only sunk the matter in deeper mystery, for the three men swore the light had not been out all night long. They said nothing of the

strange sleep that had enthralled them, nor did they even mention it among themselves, for each had an idea that he had been sleeping all the time while his companions had been wide awake, and they were positive the light had not been out by the quantity of material consumed being fully as much, if not more, than was usually used by the lamp over night.

Colonel Brower and Captain Burton were sitting in the captain's tent, talking over this and the news that was brought early from the fort of the rencontre with the smugglers, when the general, passing, asked them to step to his headquarters. It was easy to be seen that he was in no very good humor, and he rather savagely turned on Burton with the remark:

"I thought you informed me that you had gained a knowledge of the smugglers that would put an end to them?"

"So I thought I had," returned Burton, humbly. "I had made arrangements with one of their number to betray them. According to an understanding between us I went one night to conclude the bargain. Arrived at the place of meeting, I found he had been murdered. Another one of their number is now absent, but has promised when he returns to lead our people to their stronghold."

"Who is he?" was the tart question.

"His name is Slick."

"What made you let him get out of sight?" growled the general. "He may be done slick before you see him again."

"I hope not," said Burton, deferentially.

"You hope not!" sneered the angry general. "What good does that do? Another thing, Burton, this business of the smugglers has somehow got into your hands and you ought to be doing something. How about Gid Arnow? I have heard his name connected with these smugglers."

"I'll take an oath he wasn't with them last night, for Colonel Brower and myself were at his house and did not leave there until some time after twelve. I did have spies about his house, but we've never got a glimpse of him after nightfall."

"Well, well!" said the general, testily, "something must be done. Here's the lighthouse dark and the smugglers running in contraband goods under the very guns of the fort, and in the face of myself and thousands of soldiers."

"As to the light——"

"Well, what of the light?" demanded the general, as Burton hesitated.

"Colonel Brower and myself saw it burning after midnight, I'll take my oath to that."

"So will I," said Brower.

"Well, well! see to it, Captain Burton, that you do something. Good-day!" and he plunged into a file of papers waiting his inspection.

With a military salute the officers left the general's quarters and repaired again to Burton's. The colonel soon after left, but Burton had been alone but a few minutes when an orderly ushered in a tall, rather thickly-set man, who dropped into a chair in a familiar manner, with the salutation:

"Well, old man, how are you?"

"Biddle, as I live!" gasped Burton.

"At your service," was the reply, with a mock obeisance.

"Why, how is this?" said Burton, anxiously, while his face paled slightly. "Are you no longer a—a——"

"A crown detective?" said Biddle, finishing the sentence. "Yes."

"Why are—you—you—here?" faltered Burton.

"In this country, do you mean, or in this hive of yours? If you mean the latter, just for a friendly chat; if you mean the former, I'm here in search of a man."

"Who?"

"A fellow that I thought you might know, a certain Ned Nolan."

"I do," said Burton, eagerly; "and I've seen him lately."

"You have? Where?"

Burton related the incidents with which the reader is already acquainted.

"Then he is here in Boston?" said Biddle, in a reflective tone.

"He was; but whether he is now or not I couldn't say," replied Burton.

"If he is I'll find him, without any doubt. I'm fortunate in striking his trail so easily. Well, Burton, I'll leave you now, but will drop in frequently to see you."

"It'll be a pleasure to me, I assure you," said Burton, but the grimace with which he said these words and a certain gulp as if he were endeavoring to swallow a lump which had caught in his throat, seemed to be the opposite of corroboration for his words.

Nor were they unnoticed by Biddle, who arched his eyebrows and went away, softly whistling to himself.

A trifle less overbearing, a shade less jaunty, Captain Burton drew rein at Captain Arnow's door. A servant informed him that Miss Stella would be right down; she did not keep him waiting, and in a few minutes they were speeding along the streets from which they debouched into an open country road.

Stella was playing a deep game with Burton, and piece by piece artfully drew from him such information as he possessed as could be of service to the little band of smugglers, who, though their vocation was unlawful, were nevertheless patriots for striking at the king who ground them down, for showing in what contempt they held the soldiery that had been sent to destroy their liberties, to stamp out the high and noble aspirations that distinguish the human being from the servile dog.

Gradually conversation drifted around until it reached the topic Stella most wished, the smugglers.

"So you British soldiers were not smart enough to catch them?" arching her brows as she spoke.

"They got away, it is true," he said, in a vexed tone. "One would think you a traitor to the king to hear you talk, sometimes."

"Really, that's too bad," said Stella, in a tone intended to be grave, but which she could not altogether rid of a little banter. "What can I do to prove my loyalty?"

"I don't know," was the reply. "But do you know, I have sometimes thought you were more than half rebel?"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Stella, in an assumed tone of surprise. "Pray assure me that you have—that you have changed your mind."

"So I have."

"Dear—dear!" and she bent a keen glance on him from the corners of her downcast eyes. "What a pass things have come to that I should have been even suspected of being a rebel. It would not surprise me now to even hear that my father has been suspected of treason to the king."

"So he has," replied Burton.

"What!" cried Stella. "Captain Burton, you don't mean it?"

"I do. But this very morning the general intimated that your father knew more of last night's affair than was right, but I defended him by telling him that I had passed the evening at your house."

"Thank you, captain; I am sure it was very kind." Ah, could he have seen the sparkle in her eye. "And was the general satisfied, then?"

"Quite so—quite; but, as you may imagine, was more than out of humor, and swears to draw and quarter the smugglers."

"When he catches them," said Stella, drily.

"There you go again!" exclaimed Burton. "That rebel tone and air. Of course we'll catch them, as our soldiers would have done last night but for an accident. Catch them? Or

course we will; they'll give up the minute we put a hand on them. Why, last night, so report goes, one of their men was killed, and they didn't fire one shot back."

"Why not, do you suppose?"

"Afraid to fire on the king's soldiers."

"I should think this the more likely case. The leader of the smugglers did not wish to shed blood when they knew escape was certain, for, of course, it was calculated that your boats would smash up on the rocks."

"Bah!" retorted Burton. "No, Miss Arnow, they are too cowardly."

At this slur on those she knew so well, the hot blood mounted to Stella's face, and clenching her dainty hands she said, quickly, but in a ringing, clear voice:

"Cowardly! 'Tis false, I am sure. Wait, Captain Burton, until it becomes necessary to fight, and trust me, you will rue the day you met them. Wait a little, Captain Burton, until you see them fighting for home and liberty—see if they run, then—see, rather, if they do not nobly stand and fight as never men fought before."

Prophetic words were those of Stella, and long afterward Burton remembered them; but affecting to laugh, he said:

"There's no doubt in my mind now that you are a rebel."

"I am a rebel as far as standing up for those born and brought up here, when I hear them called cowards."

"Let me apologize for the offensive term," said Burton.

"It is needless," said Stella, now her old, cool self again. "But let us return, it is growing late."

"The gal has pumped him dry," thought Captain Gid, catching a glimpse of her triumphant face as she entered the house; and so she had.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ENGLISHMAN'S GRATITUDE.

The smugglers laid close on their island while Pierre, the halfbreed, went to the mainland to make arrangements for the landing of the goods they had run in.

At the expiration of two days Pierre returned, and after a few words to Yankee Davis, next in command after Captain Gid Arnow, the smugglers went briskly to work at the goods. Meanwhile Pierre singled out the young Irishman.

"Your name's Ned Nolan?"

"Yes."

"You're a fugitive from the old country?"

"I am."

"There's a price on your head?"

"There is."

"For murder?"

"No," returned Ned, quickly. "Not for murder, though they please to call it so. For defending my home as any man would."

"You have been seen and recognized since coming here?"

"I have. By Captain Burton."

"Do you know him?"

"Know him, is it? Faith, I do, the skulking hound! He was a tithe gatherer until he stole enough money from poor people to buy himself a commission in the army. Know him, is it? In faith I do. I knew him well, and once upon a time me father made him pretty well acquainted with the toe of his boot by kicking him out of doors."

"There's a crown detective here after you," said Pierre.

"How did you find that out?" asked Ned.

Pierre shook his head negatively to imply that he could not tell him, and turning suddenly on his heel, left him alone. Ned thoughtfully resumed the work he had ceased perform-

ing when Pierre addressed him. Soon all was in readiness, when he was addressed by Yankee Davis:

"Would you just as soon pull a small boat to the mainland?"

"Certainly," said Ned.

"You remember the old house overhanging the water?"

"Yes."

"Well, take your boat into the second slip to the south of that. Go straight into the bulkhead, and there you will discover the mouth of a sewer. Men will be in waiting to take the things lying in the bottom of the boat."

"All right," said Ned. "Go now?"

"In just a minute. We want to give the boat that has just left about ten minutes headway."

"Now, go," said Yankee, a few minutes later. Ned stepped into the light boat, sat down, picked up the oars, and with one good, strong pull sent the boat flying out into the darkness.

Ned pulled on at an even pace, and finally he saw looming up through the darkness the old house that overhung the water. He then changed the course of his boat and sought the second slip from it, into which he glided a minute later to find it black and grim-looking, and apparently as deserted as the grave.

Pulling to the bulkhead he inquired the time of night, in a low voice, and received, in low tones, the proper reply, and then a low voice called:

"This way a little."

Moving in the direction of the voice, Ned saw the mouth of the sewer and recognized several of the smugglers in it. They took the goods he handed them and disappeared.

Curiosity prompted Ned to follow. So, tying his boat, he did so. Following the sound of their retreating footsteps, he heard them halt, finally, and give a low whistle, when from above there streamed down the rays of a lamp. He hurried forward and joined them, and saw that a shaft had been cut down from a store into the sewer. In the store above were facilities for the secret storage of these contraband goods, and Ned could not repress an exclamation of approval at the completeness of the arrangements. After he had viewed these things he was warned that it would be better for him to depart and remove his boat, for if seen it might possibly afford a clew to their secret.

Leaving by way of the sewer, he entered his boat and pulled under the pier, where he sat for some few moments in thought.

"I'll do it!" he exclaimed, suddenly.

A strong fancy had taken hold of him to go over the ground of his flight for life, and this was what the exclamation referred to. Fastening his boat, he went to the street before the old house overhanging the water, and then commenced retracing his steps.

Turning now and then and walking briskly, he reached the cul de sac into which he had been trapped, and where he must have either been made prisoner or met his death, but for Oscian's kindly help. In its farther end Ned saw a figure slowly slinking around and examining the doors and walls.

A thought flashed across his mind. Probably Burton had seen the detective and told him of the fight that had taken place there. Might not this be the detective seeking to learn how he had so mysteriously disappeared?

Ned's suspicions were not without foundation. His reasoning, too, had been correct, for it had all come around precisely in that way.

Fascinated and held to the spot, Ned watched the detective's movements for over half an hour. At the expiration of that time Biddle gave up the task and stepped briskly toward the street.

Ned fell back into a deep doorway, and went to searching his pockets rapidly. Out came a pencil and a piece of an

envelope. On this he hastily scribbled a few words, and then hastened after the detective, who, having turned at the sound of footsteps close behind, was accosted by Ned.

"Sir, here is the note that was to reach you; let me deliver it."

"Who is it from?"

"It will explain itself."

"And who are you?"

"That it will also explain; good-night and pleasant dreams,"

and before Biddle had a chance to say anything Ned was gone. An oil lamp lighted up the street at the next corner, and to this Biddle hurried, and opening the folded piece of paper, read:

"Ned Nolan's compliments to an old friend, and may you be hung for your trouble in trying to hang me down."

"I had no idea but that the very man he was searching for."

"He would not have been so far from home, and then started wildly in the direction Ned had taken, but though he searched far and wide, he had to give over at last, and turned his steps toward his hotel.

Ned wisely beat a precipitate retreat after giving Biddle the note, and reaching his boat pulled out from the pier. He had gone but a short distance, however, when he saw looming up in the darkness a small sailboat. The wind was blowing very fresh, and something in the way the craft was handled made Ned fear they would upset, so he watched them closely. They were within a hundred yards of him, but ran away past him, and when they brought about to stand back, Ned heard loud cries for help, and saw them go over. Quickly turning the point of his boat that way, never thinking of any danger he might run himself, he arrived just in time to catch, by the hair, a head that was going down for the last time. By much exertion he got the person into the boat, and then tying the painter around the bow of the sailboat, pulled for the shore. By the time he reached there the inmate of his boat was quite recovered, and commenced cursing in round terms those who sat astride of the capsized boat for not attempting to help him.

Ned wondered that they bore this so meekly, but did not guess at the truth until, kindly assisting home the man he had saved, he found himself in the apartments of the English general, who had been spending the evening in the man-of-war, and had been returning when the accident occurred.

The general stepped into another room, and soon returned clad in a fatigue suit. He looked at Ned sharply, and then his eye roved about the room; on the desk he saw a parcel done up in brown paper, with his name on it, and at once commenced undoing it. Then a hoarse cry of surprise and anger burst from his lips, as his eyes rested on a human head; placed to it was a paper reading:

"This was signed the would-be traitor!"

"Horrid!" roared the general, and dropped it to a chair. By an effort he seized control of him self and said hoarsely:

"You have put me under an obligation to-night; let me repay it as far as I can," and he drew out a purse and offered it to Ned, who turned it with his hand.

"British gold? Never!"

"Wiser!" cried the general. "Sedition, eh? Are you a traitor? Speak, who are you?"

"I am a poor Irish lad—a refugee—Ned Nolan."

"Ned Nolan? Ah! ha! and you tell me so to my face! I have heard of you, and know you to be a murderer. What ho! catch! You shall be put under arrest."

Ned's lip curled; he drew himself proudly up and scornfully said:

"For having your life you would punish me with a hangman's noose. 'Tis an Englishman's gratitude to an Irishman."

After these parting words the British general winced, and though he was boiling with rage, he cursed the orderly when he appeared and bade him begone.

When the man had gone with that scornful smile on his lips, his arms folded, his whole being breathing contempt and defiance, and he bent his inquiring eyes on the general, who, battling with himself, bent his head in his hands.

In a few moments he raised up his eyes, passed his hand before them in a vague way, and murmured:

"I feel so strange—a spell is stealing over me. What is it?"

His strength seemed to slowly depart, he sank back in his chair, the upraised arm slowly descended until it rested by his side, the eyes became fixed, but they saw nothing, only blank space was before them. He sighed and breathed so faintly that it could scarce be seen; it was the same terrible kind of a spell that had overtaken those in the lighthouse—and Oscian glided into the room.

CHAPTER VII.

OSCIAN'S WORK.

Ned Nolan could not have been more surprised than he was by the sight of Oscian gliding into the room. It was a greater surprise than the first occasioned by seeing the general sink into that strange, slumberous state.

A fear had come upon him that some mortal sickness had seized upon the general's vitals, and he would have called for help but for Oscian's entrance. The snaky Frenchman had read Ned's feeling at the first glance, and softly whispered:

"There's no danger—he's all right! Close the door!"

Without a word Ned obeyed, and then stood by it watching Oscian, who advanced to the general's side, pulled out his watch and looked at the time, then put it back, pulled up a chair to the table or desk and began to coolly overhaul the general's private papers.

He took them up in the succession in which they had been placed by the general, read each over carefully, made notes of some, took extracts from some, and copied others entire.

He had been occupied in this way nearly an hour when there came a knock at the door, which gave Ned a start, and he cast an anxious glance toward Oscian, who never changed color a particle, nor allowed a muscle to twitch, but coolly replied:

"In half an hour."

And had not Ned seen his lips move he would have sworn it was not Oscian who spoke, but the general, so like the genuine was the Frenchman's simulated tone of voice.

Then Ned could hear the orderly "right about face," and march off down the hall, at which he could not smother a sigh of relief.

In fifteen minutes more Oscian signified that he had finished.

"Do you wish to leave the general any message?" he asked, waving his hand toward the writing materials.

"Be the powers, yes!" cried Ned, and sitting down in the chair vacated by Oscian, Ned penned these lines:

"Dear General—It is not the most polite thing in the world to go to sleep in the presence of company, even if it is only a poor Irish lad. Seeing that you have done so, I shall be equally impolite in leaving you without paying my respects. But one bit of advice I'd like to give you is this—say your prayers and keep them said up close—for if you

should ever tumble into the water again there is one person who wouldn't turn a finger to save ye, and that person is the one who has been in the water, and who has been in the water in spite of all the generals and detectives in the world.

"NED NOLAN."

"Faix," he said to himself, as he glanced over what he had written, "it's just as well to be a little defiant-like. They respect you the more for it."

Putting this where the general's eyes would rest on it the moment he opened them, Ned signified that he was ready to go.

"Come on, then," said Oscian; "and step softly."

Ned nodded acquiescence, and followed Oscian as he glided along the hall toward the interior of the house and down a flight of stairs to the kitchen hall, past the kitchen door, down another flight of stairs to the cellar, across that, up some stone steps and through a pair of old-fashioned slanting cellar doors, which Oscian raised, into the night beyond.

Oscian still led the way, and Ned noiselessly followed him across the yard to the rear of an old woodshed.

"Now we're safe," said Oscian, "and have no further need of particular caution, although every street in the city is alive with danger if we prove careless. Let me suggest a thing: Give no more notes to detectives."

"What!" gasped Ned. "How did you find that out?" and with an undefined feeling of dread he shrank slightly from his dark-faced companion.

Oscian smiled a strange, queer smile, while his black eyes twinkled and glittered.

"I know," he said, "that is enough! I like you, Ned Nolan, or I would not warn you; above all, you can be of use to us in tormenting the English, and any imprudence might make you more than useless; be careful."

"Ned's eyes lighted up.

"Then," he said, catching at the tone used by Oscian, "you really hate the English?"

"Hate!" hissed Oscian; "hate! Aye, as the devil does the God in heaven—as the vulture hates his prey!"

Ned shuddered despite himself, for he could see that his question had roused a fierce excitement in the breast of the usually placid, inscrutable, mysterious being before him.

"Hate!" hissed Oscian, after catching his breath. "Hate! The word does not describe my feelings, which are like the Three Furies of old. Hate! Have I no reason to hate? Aye, they—the English—robbed me of father and mother, and robbed them of their children, and scattered us to the four winds of heaven, and made us slaves! Hate! Ask Pierre if I hate!"

Ned was positively afraid of the man now, whose eyes glistered with a fire so bright that Ned saw them glowing in the darkness like two stars of living fire, and he was silent while he waited Oscian's pleasure.

Oscian suddenly seized him by the arm with a painful grip, and cried, shrilly, but in a low voice:

"Aye, I could murder them all, but the time is not yet come—is not yet come! But it is coming, though—I know it—I feel it—God help them then—save them from Pierre and I!" He was silent for half a minute and then added: "Listen, Ned Nolan: you are the first person in all this wide world to whom I have ever given a word of this, and would not have done so to you only I know you have good cause to hate them. I am even sorry, though, that I said a word to you, and so see to it that you never slip a word of what has passed between us to-night—there"—indicating the house—"or here. Do not say you saw me, speak not of the sleep you saw the general in, nor that I let you from the house. Speak not of these things on your life!" he solemnly concluded.

"You can depend on Ned Nolan when he gives his word. I

give ye my word, and now all the rest of the world can start it from me."

"Give ye my word!" cried Ned, and he and Oscian's soon met it.

"It's the only hand besides Pierre's that I ever took," said Oscian. "I believe in you, I trust your Irish blood and honor."

"Then hurrah for ould Ireland!" Ned began to cry aloud, when Oscian clapped a hand on his mouth.

"Sh!" he said; "it is the only trouble with you Irishmen, you are all so excitable. Now, come!"

At a street corner a few blocks distant Oscian parted with Ned, after being assured by the Irish lad that he could find his way alone to his boat. Ned hurried along when Oscian had been swallowed up by the darkness, and after a rapid walk of a few minutes' duration he reached the pier where he had disembarked after saving the general's life. Here he found some of the crew of the capsized sailboat still in their wet clothing, keeping guard over their unfortunate craft, which they had tied to the pier, although they had made no attempts to right her. At Ned they looked rather sharply, and demanded was he the knave who prevented their gloriously rescuing the general.

"Ye save the general!" cried Ned, flushing under the term knave. "Ye dirty cowards, ye were sitting astraddle the boat wid no more thought of the general than had the boat itself!"

"Silence!" yelled one of the redcoats; "silence, or I'll put a bullet into your Irish hide!"

"Ye will, will ye?" sneered Ned.

"Yes; say another word and we'll march you off to the lock-up!"

"Faith, I give ye me word ye'll do no such thing!" retorted Ned. "The water ye're all in now is hot enough without getting into any hotter. Do ye suppose the general has no feeling of gratitude toward the man who saved his life?"

The soldiers shrank away from him in dismay, and one said, gloomily:

"I believe we are in hot water."

"I'll give ye me word on't," said Ned, to tantalize them. "It's hot enough to make ye all as red as biled lobsters, barrin' the coat!" and Ned brushed past them and entered the boat. As he pulled away he sent after them a last shot: "The general was askin' me opinion about a court-martial, and me reply, I think, settled the matter. Shot for cowardliness! I'll be there to testify against ye!"

After a brisk pull Ned drew near Smugglers' Island, received the signal and giving the proper reply, was allowed to land.

Recognizing him, the sentinel said, with a laugh:

"In trouble the first time you went ashore, eh? I'm afraid you'll get your liberty stopped."

Replying with a shrug of his shoulders, Ned started up the steep path to the sentry box, where he found the sentinel all alone, and he sat down on the bench, and he was alone.

"Well, young man, I'm glad to see you back. You failed to remember the warning you received before you left, and got into a peck of trouble. You must be more circumspect for our sakes as well as your own, or you'll have to remain on the island. So you saved the general, eh?"

"How do you know that?" cried Ned, and he was so evident as to draw forth a laugh from the sentinel.

CHAPTER VIII.

NED'S FIRST VISIT TO THE GENERAL'S CLOSET.

The general heard a deep sigh, and he looked up, and his eyelids twitched and he moved slightly, and he was

dimly conscious of the light of the lamp, and the surroundings as a whole, but was yet enthralled with a heaviness of mind, a lack of perception, and seemed in a dreamy state; that condition just between waking and sleeping, when you are conscious of things going on about you only as if seen through a veil of mist and fog.

So when a knock came at his door the general gave no reply, though conscious of its occurrence. When it was repeated, louder and more distinct, it aroused him up completely, and he started bolt upright in his chair and gazed stupidly about him as if trying to remember what he was doing there. Then his eyes chanced to fall on the traitor's head, when quick as lightning an angry flush dyed his face and forehead, and a quick glance revealed the fact that Ned was gone.

Quickly covering the ghastly object he had so strangely received, he growled out in response to a third knock:

"Come in—come in! What are you standing out there for all night?"

The door opened and the orderly entered, made a salute, and came to a halt.

The general took out his watch, which, as he glanced at it, caused an expression of surprise to light his face, concealing which he angrily cried:

"Sirrah! what do you mean by coming here a full three-quarters of an hour behind your time?"

"I was here, sir, half an hour ago; the door was shut; I knocked, and a voice from inside said: 'Come in half an hour.' It may have been some one else, sir; the young fellow who came in with you when you had stepped out for a few minutes, perhaps?" said the orderly, eagerly.

The general began to understand the matter himself, but it would not do for him to take water before the orderly, so he curled his lip contemptuously as if he still believed him a liar, and then briskly and sharply said:

"You mentioned the young fellow you saw come in with me. Have you seen him go out?"

"No, sir," hesitatingly answered the badgered orderly.

"And yet he's gone."

The orderly looked helplessly about the apartment, but made no reply.

"You have been on duty at the foot of the front stairs all this while?"

"I have, sir."

"Enough—you may go. I have no orders for such a man as you," and the poor fellow went away, quaking with fear, leaving the general quaking with rage, for as the orderly was backing out he had picked up and read Ned Nolan's note.

"Now, by all the saints, this is awful—awful!" hissed the general, and then compressing his lips grimly, he added: "This shall be looked into in the morning."

A suspicion flashed across his mind that his papers might have been tampered with, and he began to scrutinize them carefully, but could find no trace of their having been disturbed. Oscan always did his work well. Delicate of touch, light of foot, keen as a fox, fleet as a greyhound, he never left any traces behind.

The next morning Captain Burton received a summons to headquarters, and went there, wondering what was in the wind.

Saluting humbly, to curry favor, he coughed, settled himself in his clothes, and looked askance at the general.

"I sent for you to have a talk about the smugglers. Have you advanced any yet?"

"I am sorry to say not as yet, but you will please to reflect that it was only night before last when you so urgently requested my pushing the matter. I can assure you I have done all that could be accomplished in one day."

"You have so!" sneered the general, in a way that made Burton feel particularly uncomfortable.

"Yes, sir."

"And have you seen the man you took in your employ?"

"Again I am sorry to say I have not," replied Burton.

"But Slick will not disappoint me, I feel quite sure."

"No, he will not disappoint you," said the general. "He is here."

"Here?" gasped Burton. "Where?"

For reply his superior drew off the screen of paper and Burton started back aghast at sight of the head of the traitor.

"Done slick enough, I suppose, to suit even you," said the general, grimly. "Sit down; you look weak."

Burton accepted the invitation and sank into a chair. Recovering the use of his wits in a few minutes; he began talking volubly in his own defense, until he was silenced by the general, who, in a short, grim conversation that followed, placed the heavy responsibility on Burton's shoulders of doing something toward hunting down the smugglers. Burdened by the responsibility thus forced on him, Burton went back to his own quarters with head and shoulders bent down.

Awaiting him he found Moses Biddle, the crown detective, who was in a very splenetic mood, occasioned by his recollections of the encounter with Ned Nolan, and Biddle was not slow in pulling out the corks of his vials of wrath and letting them pour down on Burton's head, as if in some way he was accountable for it all.

A haggard, hunted look came in Burton's face, and finally he said, in a feverish way:

"Biddle, for heaven's sake be quiet! Don't be too hard on me, for I'm in trouble enough now. Be easy, man, or between you and the general, who is down on me, I'll be driven to suicide or to desert and hide in the woods for the rest of my life."

"Bah!" said Biddle, contemptuously. "You haven't spunk enough to desert; you'd be afraid of being captured and shot. Now, if it was only to rob somebody, with no greater penalty than prison, I might expect it of you. But desertion—oh, no!"

"Biddle! Biddle!" cried Burton, "don't go back on me—help me if you can!"

"Is there anything to be made out of it?"

"Yes—yes!" cried Burton, eagerly. "I've got a few hundred pounds I'll give you gladly."

"It's a bargain, then," replied the detective, in a mollified tone. "And if you'll give me the points I'll look into the matter at once."

After an hour's conversation they separated, and Burton was left in a more hopeful frame of mind, though only comparatively so, for he was still so disturbed that he entirely forgot an engagement with Stella Arnow, and it never occurred to him until three or four days later.

Biddle had brought him a "report of progress," and Burton had carried it to the general as the results of his own labor. Having been pleasantly received by the general, the captain felt that the storm clouds that had lately overhung him were breaking away, that clearer skies were appearing, and so his heart grew lighter and then his broken engagement recurred to him.

"I must go and apologize," he thought, and having had his hair dressed he made his way to the Arnow mansion, receiving a warm welcome at Stella's hands, who graciously said his dereliction had not been taken as a slight, for she felt sure that nothing but a stern duty could keep the captain from her side.

Stella knew what she was about, and shrewdly twisted him around her finger.

This information must be imparted that night, so Captain

Gid decided when she told him what she had learned, and then his face became grave, and he thoughtfully said:

"I hardly know how to accomplish it, though, Stella. That fellow I pointed out to you I have learned is a crown detective by the name of Biddle. He shadows the house night and day, and I'm almost afraid to venture out."

"Papa," said Stella, after a moment's reflection, "will Oscian be at the place of meeting?"

"Yes."

"Then I will go."

"You?"

"Yes."

"No, no, Stella; a woman would be too noticeable now. During the past week many changes have taken place. The streets are guarded where they diverge into the country, and a woman is never seen at night."

"Wait here," said Stella, and then hastened from the apartment.

In a short while the door opened, and Captain Gid gasped at the transformation he saw—Stella, changed into a tall, well-developed young man. She blushed as her father's eyes rested on her, and said:

"Now don't say anything about the immodesty, papa. It's all for my country's sake, and besides, no one will see me but Oscian, and him I shall not mind. As for you"—and her arms went around his shaggy neck—"I am sure you will never think less of me."

"No, never, never!" cried Captain Gid. "Stella, you're a trump. Yes, I can trust you. Go ahead."

"Tell mamma."

"I will."

"Wait up for me."

"Aye, aye!"

And so Stella crept forth on her mission, escaped the observation of that watch-dog, the crown detective, and then at a rapid gait started toward a place where Captain Gid and Oscian had frequently met at night, and whither the latter always resorted at a particular hour. It was the cul de sac in which Ned had been trapped the night Oscian rescued him.

Toward this point, then, Stella Arnow hurried, and she was within a block of it when she heard a footstep close behind her. Half halting, she let a man go by who looked sharply at her as he passed, went on a few steps, then suddenly turned on her.

"What's the time of night?"

"Twelve o'clock," replied Stella.

"And——"

"All's well," she added, and then the young man quickly asked:

"You were going to meet Oscian?"

"Yes."

"Then don't go. Faix, the redcoats have smelt out the spot and are a-watchin' of it this blessed minute," said Ned Nolan, for he it was. "Oscian isn't there the night, and sent me in his stead. Have you news for us?"

Stella had recognized the young Irishman, and her cheeks were crimson at being caught by him in the guise she wore, and so taken aback was she that for a minute or two she could not speak. Something in his quiet, off-hand manner of speaking, the entire lack of anything like surprise, led her to hope that he had not recognized her, and controlling herself she gave him a hasty outline of the information in her possession.

CHAPTER IX.

NED A PRISONER.

After Yankee Davis had finished the laugh in which he had indulged at sight of Ned's amazement, he replied:

"Easy enough. Pierre saw the whole occurrence, and informed us of it before we left the house where you saw us."

"Oh!" said Ned, in such a hearty way that they all had a laugh at his expense, which he did not at all mind, but helped them to enjoy it better by saying:

"Laugh away, me gossoons, ye do it neatly."

The next few days passed very quietly on the island, and Pierre came out and remained a couple of days. On the day that Burton called on Stella, Oscian visited Smuggler's Island, and at once he and Pierre plunged into a mysterious and lengthy conversation, at the conclusion of which Oscian drew Ned aside and said:

"Irish Ned, I am going to prove that I trust you now. There is not one of our old men you see there but would jump at the opportunity that I am going to give you—well—because I have told you some of my history, and because we both have common ground in hating the English. You remember the place where I first met you?"

"Is it the place where I was cornered by them redcoats? Aye, I remember it well, that I do."

"Every night at one o'clock I am accustomed to be there to meet Captain Arnow in case he wishes to send information to the island. I want you to take my place to-night."

"Faix, I'll do that same with pleasure," said Ned. "But mayhap you'll remember I don't know this same Captain Arnow, though I would know his daughter anywhere, God bless her purty eyes."

"Well," said Oscian, "he is a large man, which is about all you could tell in the darkness. The safest way is to give our countersign."

"Aye, I'll do that same."

"And one other thing, Irish Ned, be careful, be discreet. They keep sentinels all along the water's edge now and through the outskirts; you must get through without being seen."

"I'll do it, never fear," replied Ned, confidently; and when he had shaken the silent, dark, mysterious Oscian by the hand, that individual joined Pierre and they disappeared down the rocky path leading to the shore.

Ned waited until nearly midnight, and then, seated in a light boat, pulled across the bay toward the city.

After many careful inquiries of his smuggler companions he had selected a place to land, which, in the opinion of a majority of those he had consulted, was the safest.

On the alert, sharp-eyed, quick-eared, he commenced the advance, taking advantage of the deep doorways and projecting shadows, while he was keenly alive to every footfall and sound.

But despite his precautions he suddenly found himself confronted by a sentinel, who had been screened by a projecting house. The sentinel at once challenged, and presented his musket.

For just one second Ned was nonplused, and then giving a pitch to one side, he stood unsteadily on his feet a second, and then lurched the other way, at the same time assuming a maudlin tone and air, and with many hiccoughs he said:

"Is zis Bos'on, that a man should be stopped in ze streets?"

Now "Boston" happened to be the countersign that night and this was about the only word that Ned uttered that was perfectly intelligible to the sentinel.

"I've a good notion to run you in," said the guard.

"Don't ye do it," said Ned, with a grand wave of the hand. "On th' general's private business, had a little suthin'-drink—that's all want password be me zee—" and he lurched heavily against the guard, who gave him a shove onward, with the surly remark:

"You're lying, and I know it; and if there was anything to be made by it I'd run you in; but as there ain't, why, get along lively."

Laughing in his sleeve, Ned rolled along until he had turned the corner. Glancing back and seeing the sentinel standing as he had left him, Ned thought all danger of pursuit was over, straightened himself and briskly walked onward. The sentinel, however, was not so easily imposed upon, and overcoming his desire to avoid taking any trouble for nothing, he hastened to the corner, only to hear Ned's distant footfalls, not wavering and uncertain, but clear and distinct, every one.

"The bloody snoozer!" growled the Englishman. "I'll not be fuddled and fooled this way," and he gave a low, clear call which Ned so indistinctly heard as not to be alarmed by.

Another sentinel responded to the call, and another, and more, until their party numbered five, when they hurried after Ned, who, true to his Irish characteristics, was whistling gaily for his own amusement. It was a feature of his nature, this devil-may-care style, even when he knew himself to be in the midst of danger.

He was easily traced by his pursuers up to the point where he left off whistling, which was just opposite the cul de sac, which he merely glanced into and then passed on, and concealed himself a couple of hundred feet distant.

"The omadhauns!" he exclaimed, when the redcoats stopped in front of the cul de sac, and then entered it, all but one, who remained outside, just far enough to see up and down the street. "They're after me again and I'll dance 'em a jig if they catch Ned Nolan, so I will!"

When the sentry's back was turned he stole away, and as the reader has seen, accosted Stella Arnow in time to prevent her going to the place of meeting. To make sure of not addressing the wrong person, Ned had delayed giving the signal until hard on the cul de sac. Had they instantly faced about they might have been unseen, but they erred in standing where they met; for just as Stella had finished her communication and when Ned was swelling with pride at being in a position to help her, there came a rush of feet, and they saw the redcoats flying toward them.

In the twinkling of an eye Ned saw how matters stood.

"We must separate!" he cried, low and quick. "Ye start first and I'll draw 'em off after me when ye get a start. Go—purty eyes—ye mustn't be seen in men's clothes by them heathens."

"Then you know me?" gasped Stella, more taken aback by this for the moment than the danger that threatened.

"Ye know me as a purty eyes, I'll be a blest a word out, Ned Nolan, the name and the word is as good as me both as ye go!"

Stella rolled no longer, but darted away, leaving Ned to face the five redcoats, who by this time were hard upon him. He drew out his pistol and stood upon the defensive, and they halted when, within a few feet.

"Do you surrender?"

"What do you want?" demanded Ned, listening to the fall of Stella's flying feet.

"We want you."

"What for?"

"For fun."

"Fun, is it?"

Stella's words were growing fainter.

"Come now, was he said to, 'throw up your arms!'"

Stella's words died away.

Ned held out himself to look out for now.

"So you want me?" he quizzed.

"Yes, and we mean to have you."

"Then come and take me!" shouted Ned, and turning suddenly, dashed away like a greyhound.

"Catch him, catch him!"

"Ah! but the devil, ye devil! my time's not come yet, Ned Nolan, my time's not come yet, do you like it?"

On—on like the wind, and he was beginning to laugh

with triumph. On—on—the flying bullets whistling wide of their mark; on—on—with the hubbub and noise growing, louder and louder; on—on—the din of shouting voices, banging doors and raised windows; on—on—and into the arms of two sentinels hurrying from a direction opposite to the one he was pursuing.

Up came his ready pistol, but ere he could use it it was knocked from his hand, a blow felled him to the ground, and Ned Nolan, name or no name, was a prisoner.

CHAPTER X.

NED IN PRISON.

The blow which Ned received on the head, besides knocking him down, generally confused his ideas, for, as he afterward described it to Oscian, he seemed to see a succession of vivid flashes of light, accompanied by a warring sound, that induced the impression that a whole pack of artillery had gone off within ten feet of him.

Certain it is that he crawled to his feet with his face wearing a dazed look of astonishment, and he was surrounded on all sides by redcoats before he could collect his scattered senses.

"Blarst yer heyes!" gasped the sentinel he had felled, gasping for breath between each word, "come along now; what a blarsted fool I was not to take you in first."

Without much loss of time they marched him off to the lock-up, where he spent the remainder of the night.

It was near noon of the next day when he was taken out and hurried before a sort of court, or more exactly a petty court-martial, before several British officers. One of the judges that day happened to be Colonel Burton, who will be remembered as Captain Burton's friend and companion in visiting Captain Gid's house on the night of Stella's brave piloting of the smugglers beneath the guns of the fort. Burton had dropped in to exchange compliments with the colonel, and was doing so when Ned was led in.

He started in surprise, and then a look of joy flashed across his face, and he exclaimed:

"Colonel, here's luck!"

"What?"

"See the prisoner?"

"Yes."

"It's Ned Nolan, the young Irish fugitive."

"The fellow who shot the Marquis of Kerr?"

"Yes," said Burton, eagerly. "And a desperate fellow he is. Commit him to a strong cell in the jail, colonel—the lock-up wouldn't hold him an hour if he wanted to get out."

Ned had let the fellow reach the side of the table intended to represent the prisoners' dock, and so heard Burton's concluding remark, which, seeing the captain's eyes turned toward him, Ned acknowledged as a compliment by a very low, mocking bow.

Ned was speedily arraigned.

"What is the charge against this fellow?"

The fooled sentinel was on hand, and stepping briskly forward, said:

"Suspicious character, sir; could not give the counterintelligence; pretended to be drunk so I let him go home; when he was skyracking, heersted him; he gave us a heap of trouble, sir."

"That'll do," was the other's reply. "We'll hold him, guard, and let me congratulate you on the arrest! Convey this fellow to the city prison," saying his hand toward Ned, who submitted quietly to being led away, knowing well that it would be more than foolish to offer any resistance under

the circumstances, while Burton, bidding Brower a hasty good-day, hurried away to inform the crown detective of Ned's arrest and incarceration in prison.

As Ned was marched through the streets he heard loud murmurs of sympathy on all sides from people who flocked to doorways and windows as he passed. And some, more bold than the rest, could be heard to cry: "For shame to let that man be dragged to prison!" "What an outrage!" "This thing must have a stop put to it!" and had it not been broad daylight Ned felt sure that one single cry for help would have been sufficient to incite the crowd to fall on his guards and wrest him from their grasp.

"Things can't last this way long," thought Ned. "There'll be the biggest kind of a row anent another year or I'm no Irishman."

And yet he only saw what every one else saw plainly, that the time for an open rupture with the king was speedily approaching.

As these remarks of sympathy reached his ear he would endeavor to catch a glimpse of the speaker's face, and on one occasion he could not help giving a slight start as his eyes encountered those of Pierre, the halfbreed.

Ned saw him lay his finger on his lips to indicate caution, then giving the prisoner a look of encouragement, Pierre disappeared.

This little incident made Ned of better cheer than he had been since encountering Captain Burton, at seeing whom his heart had sunk, knowing that his identity would, of course, be revealed. As he stood before the court-martial his heart had sunk, though no one who saw him would have guessed it, so proud and defiant was his carriage.

He went onward with a lighter heart and step now, for he felt sure that the halfbreed and his mysterious brother Oscian would not leave him to be sent back to England to be hung, without at least attempting to help him escape. And Oscian's trying, in Ned's mind, was equivalent to being in actual safety, for the young Irish lad, though not exactly giving the dark-faced, mysterious man credit with being in league with the powers of darkness, nevertheless believed him gifted with some secret, if not supernatural power.

The jail or prison was reached, and Ned was locked up in a strong cell with one grated window high from the floor. When it became known who he was the jailer would not trust him alone, and put an armed soldier into the cell with him, who, locking the door on the inside, put the key in his pocket, loosened the heavy pistols in his belt, took a cigar, and while lazily smoking, kept a close watch on Ned.

A couple of hours after being locked up, he received a visit from the detective, Biddle, who had at last been found by Captain Burton, and who had received the news with the most extravagant manifestations of joy. For in his secret heart he had many misgivings about ever capturing Ned, yet not wishing to return to England and be disgraced by not having him a prisoner.

To the detective's crowing remarks Ned answered in a quiet, dignified way; nor raised his voice above an ordinary tone until Biddle said, with malignant glee:

"You've got a fine neck for stretching, and, Ned, when it is stretched I promise you one thing—that your mother shall be there to see it done."

Then Ned's flashing eyes were fixed sternly on the detective, and he cried:

"You low-lived hound! your lips are too foul that my mother's name should ever cross them; and for the stretching of my neck, I'll be up in a hour day before ye see that same done. Ye snout of the gutter, ye lull-necked beef-jerker, I'd kill me self before I'd let the likes of ye the pleasure of takin' me back again the day. Do ye think ye'll do it?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Biddle. "Do I think I'll do it? I'll swear to it!"

"Faith," he exclaimed, "I'll swear to the contrary. And moind what I now say to ye, I'll be out of this place in less nor three days!"

Biddle started at the firm ring in Ned's tones, and gazed searchingly at him as if to read in his mind any plan of escape that might be lingering there, then glanced apprehensively around the cell and at the guard.

"Pshaw! it is impossible!" he thought, and then with a low, derisive laugh he said to the sentry:

"Do you hear that? He says he's going to escape inside of three days. Did you hear it?"

The sentry nodded his head and grimly tapped his pistol butts to indicate, "just let him try it!"

In truth, Ned had no more idea of escaping inside of three days than had the sentry, and had only said it to worry the detective. Seeing that Biddle was uneasy, he followed it up by saying:

"I'll bet you a guinea on it!"

"Done!" said Biddle, with a laugh.

"I'll claim it," said Ned, confidently; "and now I'll give ye me word yer absence 'll give me more pleasure nor yer company."

Biddle left him, very slowly, but evidently was uneasy in mind, for his face appeared at the grated door a number of times during the afternoon and evening. Ned saw it for the last time that night just as the guard was about to be relieved, which was therefore twelve o'clock.

It was at the bars again the next morning at nine o'clock, and every few hours thereafter during the entire day, affording Ned much amusement in watching its reappearance, and giving him a broad field in guessing now and then how much longer he would have to wait. Each time he would laugh to let the detective know he saw him, Biddle endeavoring to keep his visits a secret from the prisoner; and sometimes Ned would sing out:

"Keep a guinea handy—I don't want to wait very long when I call for it."

At nine o'clock at night on the third day of Ned's imprisonment the face of Biddle once appeared at the door.

"Well," he called, "you haven't gone yet?"

"No," said Ned, determined to bring the detective to the end, he added with a significant shake of his head, "but the three days will not be up until this time to-morrow mornin'. Come here then."

"Won't find you here?"

"Divil a hair of me."

"I'll risk it," and Biddle went away, chuckling to himself.

Ned soon after threw himself down on the low cot, and lay there musing over his situation, and wondering whether Stella Arnow had reached home safely, and trying to imagine where Pierre and Oscian were, and whether the managers had yet received the information he had been unable to deliver; and while wondering, sank into dreamland.

His waking was then and ever afterward a mystery to him. It occurred some time after midnight when he felt as if some invisible hand were laid upon him. That some invisible hand or force caused him to rise to a standing position, and swing his feet off the cot and place them on the floor. He was sensible of a great dread, as if his faculties were bound up and could not be used. His eyes moved mechanically around until they rested on his guard, who was leaning heavily back in his chair as motionless as a dead man. Ned's thoughts were so hurried that this occasioned no surprise, nor did he plan to do that he immediately did, that is to rise from his bed, softly cross the floor, insert his hand in the guard's pocket, take out

the key, unlock the door, and step out into the hall—when the numbness was gone like a flash and he was himself again.

CHAPTER XI.

NED CLAIMS THE REWARD.

Stella Arnow grew more than scarlet when she became aware that the Irish youth had recognized her, and it will be remembered that for a minute or two she was too dumfounded to stir.

Then, recalled to a sense of her danger by Ned's urgent entreaty to fly, she took to her heels, and Ned having drawn them off her track, she reached home in safety.

Panting for breath she entered the house, receiving a greeting from Captain Gid as much of alarm as surprise at her flushed face and hard breathing.

"What has happened?" he cried. "You were pursued?"

"In one minute," gasped Stella, sinking into a chair and striving to regain her breath.

When she was composed she related what had occurred, bemoaning the penetration of her disguise with hot and burning red face, and wondering if Ned had got away in safety.

"I sincerely hope so," said Captain Gid, "as the information you gave him can't reach the island too quickly. I will wake your mother and take a nap myself so as to be out early in the morning. As to your being known by the young Irishman, my dear, do not grieve yourself, for as a gentleman he will never mention it to any one else; and, besides, if he ever meets you in your proper guise he cannot fail to see that you are a lady, even though you dressed in men's clothing once."

Comforted by these reflections, Stella left her father and repaired to her own room, where, musing over the occurrences of the night, she suddenly paused and murmured:

"I will no longer regret having been seen in that attire. No, never; my country, for thy sake I would appear before the world at large and laugh at the scorn directed at me by lukewarm fools."

Mrs. Arnow was only too glad to be of some service to the cause, and readily accepted the task of remaining awake until morning so as to arouse her husband early.

After a nap of several hours Captain Gid was awakened according to his directions, and at once started out. Sauntering along he gradually approached the house above the sewer; the store was just being opened when he paused in front of it, and with a nod to the young man who was taking down the shutters, he glided into the store and through it to a back room, pulling a bell-cord in one corner.

"Morning, Captain Gid," said a bluff, honest-faced man, making his appearance from the rooms above through a narrow, covered staircase.

"Morning," responded Captain Gid, returning the former's abbreviated form of salutation.

"Anything wrong?" asked the storekeeper, in a low voice. "You seem kinder troubled like."

"I am just trying to learn if anything has gone wrong," was the captain's reply. "I am a little afraid one of the boys has been captured last night."

"Who?"

"The new member."

"What! The young Irishman?"

"Yes."

"Just what you could expect," returned the storekeeper. "I judge him to be a brace, good-hearted fellow, but rash, captain, a little rash."

"Has the halfbreed been here lately?"

"No."

"Not since when?"

"Three or four nights ago. But why don't you go to his house?"

"The place is watched."

"So—ho!" ejaculated the other. "I must keep my eyes open, too, or I may be—dang it, captain, speak of the fellow with horns and a tail—you know the rest."

And he nodded his head toward the door.

Captain Gid turned that way and saw the halfbreed just entering.

"Pierre, you're the very man I wished to see," the captain said, when the halfbreed stepped into the back room. "You won't mind my speaking to him privately?" to the storekeeper.

"Out upon you, Captain Gid, for asking such a question! Mind it? I wouldn't mind being skinned alive for the good of the cause we're all a-workin' for!"

Neither would he.

It is sometimes a matter of wonder to the present generation that our forefathers, with so small and poorly equipped and provisioned army, should have gained the liberty we enjoy. Can it be so much a source of wonder when such sentiments as the above, and others we have quoted, fell from the lips of the sons of the soil?

Captain Gid gave Pierre a brief outline of the affair, and then the halfbreed hurried away, and, as already recorded, saw Ned a prisoner on his way to the jail and gave him that look of encouragement, and later in the day he sent a messenger to his brother, then in Salem.

Oscian returned the next night, and meeting Pierre, they both went to Captain Gid's house, where both received a warm welcome.

"You have just returned from Salem?" said the captain.

"Yes."

"What about the smack? You heard from them?"

"I did; she will arrive three nights hence with a full load."

"Pierre wrote you that we had learned that a man-of-war was to be stationed outside of the harbor to cruise to and fro in search of the smugglers?"

"He did, and I left word to that effect for the captain of the smack. It is only one more complication, but we can overcome it," replied Oscian, confidently.

"And now about this young Irishman," said Captain Gid. "It seems that his capture will result in his being sent to England to be hung. I'm very sorry, for he could have made good his escape had he not remained behind to cover Stella's flight."

Again that queer smile played about Oscian's face.

"I think I can effect his escape; I'll try it to-morrow night."

"If you get a chance, bring him here; I should like to see him," said the captain.

Oscian bowed, and he and Pierre soon after withdrew.

Though Ned did not know it, Oscian's dark face was at the window of his cell that night when he awoke with that strange feeling hanging to him. The face had appeared at the window some few moments before, and the eyes had at first been fastened on the guard, wide awake then, but who in a minute or two began to droop, and ere long sank into the stupor in which Ned found him.

Then the strange, black eyes, with the appearance of a slumbering fire in their depths, were turned on Ned, and he awoke.

As stated, Ned suddenly became himself again when in the corridor or hall; at the same instant the face disappeared from the wire door.

For a minute or so the Irish lad stood still and reflected,

and then he stole softly along the corridor to where another crossed it transversely, the latter leading down a flight of stairs to the main entrance. Before reaching this Ned saw a guard before it—a soldier, leaning on his musket, gazing blankly at the wall, and mumbling softly to himself at not having been yet relieved.

His back was toward Ned, who determined to at once seize the advantage it afforded him.

Stepping more cautiously than ever, he discovered the stairs and stole softly toward the guard, who, all unconscious of what was transpiring, continued anathematizing his non-relief.

Without hearing anything the guard suddenly became aware of the presence of somebody, and was slowly facing about, when Ned bounded quickly forward and silenced the cry of alarm on the sentinel's lips by felling him to the floor with a regular Irish muscular stroke on the side of the head.

The sentinel went down like a log.

Without stopping to inquire into the man's condition Ned hastily turned the key in the door, stepped outside, and was about to hurry away when he became conscious of that same strange feeling, and despite himself was rooted to the spot.

"Hist!" said a cautiously low voice beside him. "Now, come, but be quiet as possible."

And Ned saw Oscian beside him.

He would have uttered a low cry of astonishment not un-mixed with fear, had not the mysterious being suddenly clapped a hand on his mouth.

"Quiet! Now come."

Once more that old, indefinable feeling of dread for this man came upon the Irish lad, and he shrank away from Oscian as far as he could, and thought:

"It is his presence that gave me that strange feeling; begorra, but I'm almost willing to believe that by one look of his eye he could make a man stand still while he cut him into bits no bigger than a barley-corn."

By and by the feeling of dread gave way to one of gratitude at his liberation, and he walked close beside Oscian, along a route he well remembered, that of his flight on the night when he first arrived in Boston.

And soon they could see all the tavern in which the scene had transpired, and from which the light now shone, for the English proprietor now kept open all night to administer to the thirst of the night guards.

"The detective is putting up there," said Oscian, appearing to divine that Ned was thinking of the place.

"He does?" cried Ned, with a sudden interest and a recurring to his mind of the wager he had made with the detective.

"Yes."

"Cushla!" he said, softly; then, with a wave of his hand to Oscian, he silently skipped up the low stoop and peered through the glass door into the barroom.

He started in surprise, for there sat Biddle, his elbow on a table, his head resting on his hand, apparently asleep. The room was otherwise deserted, the landlord being in a back room talking to somebody.

A flash of resolution crossed Ned's face. He softly opened the door and stole inside, despite the low remonstrance of Oscian, who had not yet had time to fairly understand what Ned was about.

The Irish lad tiptoed to the detective's side, and saw that in his other hand he clutched a guinea piece, as if he had taken it out to pay his reckoning.

Ned twisted it from his fingers without fully awaking him; then picking up the empty pewter mug out of which Biddle had been drinking, he raised it above the detective's head and then called, low but clear:

"Wake up, man, wake up!"

Biddle opened his eyes and sleepily turned them on Ned, not recognizing him for an instant; with a startled look on his face he opened his lips as Ned said:

"I've come to claim the wager! I took a guinea from your hand, which squares me, and to——"

Biddle tried to rise, and made a grab at Ned, who finished the sentence:

"And to give you this!" bringing the pewter mug heavily down on the detective's head, who, with a low moan, sank back in his chair and rolled off on the floor.

"Faith," muttered Ned, "that was a pretty clip; don't you feel sick at your stomach, me gossoon?"

And he glided out quickly, having noticed the voices in the back room suddenly cease. He was outside of the door, and just closing it, when the landlord and two redcoats, who had visited him for the means of appeasing their thirst for 'alf-an'-'alf, rushed from the back room.

And as he and Oscian hurried away they heard the surprised exclamations of the trio as they stumbled over the body of the unconscious detective. Oscian quickly turned a corner with Ned, so when the landlord reached the street and gazed up and down, he found it deserted. And Ned finished his night's rest in the house above the sewer.

CHAPTER XII.

LOST OVERBOARD.

The next night, in company with Oscian, Ned visited the Arnows.

Stella grew rosy at sight of Ned, but gave him her hand frankly and returned his warm pressure, at which he became bolder and put it to his lips.

"I am so sorry," said Stella, later in the evening; "that you should have been made a prisoner on my account."

"Faith, Miss Arnow, it was not on your account at all—at all; it was on me own. If I had only been captured on account of staying behind they could only have held me as a suspicious person, but on my own they put me in prison."

"Well, I was the cause, for all that," returned Stella. "Your generous action in giving me time to escape will never be forgotten, I can assure you."

"Faith," exclaimed Ned, "I'd do it again if I was to be hung for it!"

"And," said Stella, hesitatingly, "I was so—so—sorry that you penetrated my disguise——"

"Nonsense, alanna; if I had not seen through it ye might not have got away so easy."

"Truc—truc," said Stella, quickly, who had not before seen this view of the case. "No, perhaps I am not sorry at all."

"Ye need not be," was the reply. "I'm only a blundering Irish gossoon, bless your soul, fit only to be hung."

"No—no, that's not so," said Stella, warmly defending the warm-hearted Irish lad from himself, and thinking that she rather liked his frank and manly air.

"Say no more," said Ned, "and I never will. Have no fear, I'll never make yer husband feel jealous of me for havin' seen ye togged out in boy's clothes."

"Thank you—but there's papa been calling to you the last two or three minutes, and you never heard him."

It was Ned's turn to get rosy, and he did so with a vengeance.

He would not have allowed himself to become so preoccupied for the world if he could have helped it; still, his ready wit came to his aid, and he made Stella, who was half

laughing at him, turn away as rosy as himself by immediately retorting:

"Faith, miss, 'twas yer fault, anyhow."

Presenting himself before the captain he listened to hear what he might say.

"Do you know anything about sailing vessels, Ned?"

"I do that, sir. Many's the hour I've spent in me own bit of a craft."

"Would you like to go on board of the smack instead of staying on the island?"

"Ye want me idea of it?"

"Yes."

"Then, sir, put me where I'll be of the most use, and have no thought of me."

"Well," said Captain Gld, explanatorily, "it is hardly safe for you in and around Boston. The smack is short-handed, and I thought if you'd go——"

"It's settled, sir, without any more words. Just put me on board and the job's done."

"Oscian will attend to that; and now, Ned, let me thank you for covering my daughter's retreat—I suppose she has done the same already—and I assure in addition that——"

"Captain," said Ned, interrupting him, "I don't like this same at all."

"What don't you like?"

"Yer spakin' of the matter at all. There's no thanks wanted, and if there was, Miss Arnow—God bless her purty face, says Ned Nolan—has more than paid the bill."

"Well—well, Ned, we won't quarrel," said Captain Gld, with a laugh, and then Oscian signified his readiness to depart.

At parting, Stella gave her hand to Ned, but prevented the carrying out of the gallantry he would have shown by putting it to his lips.

"That will do on your side of the water," she said, "but not here."

"You like her?" said Oscian, in a suggestive tone of inquiry, after they were some distance from the house.

"I do," was the honest reply, and a word from Oscian might have drawn Ned into a long eulogium of Stella, who, to him, was the embodiment of bravery since he had seen her guiding the boats that night, and now was to him the embodiment as well of all that was pure and good and lovely in woman.

Accompanying Oscian, he was soon outside of the pickets that guarded the outlets of the streets, and then was driven to Salem, the mysterious man having procured, after an absence of some minutes, during which he had left Ned standing by the roadside, a horse and wagon.

Tying his horse, Oscian led Ned toward the water-side, and after a number of twists and turns stopped before a tumble-down house and gave three distinct raps, three times repeated.

"Who comes there?"

"A friend."

"What's the time?"

"Twelve o'clock."

"And——"

"All's well."

The door was opened, and they entered a low-ceilinged, barely furnished, dismal-looking room.

Oscian drew the man aside and whispered with him a few minutes, and then said, turning to Ned:

"You remain here with this man to-day; the smack will be off the coast to-night, and he will put you on board, where you will give this to the captain," handing Ned a letter; "It is concerning you."

"All right," said Ned, taking the letter and putting it in his pocket. "Any further orders?"

"No."

"Goin' back now?" queried Ned, as Oscian crossed to the door.

"Yes."

"Give me best compliments to the young lady and her father."

Oscian bowed, and a minute after the door closed behind him.

Ned took things as coolly as possible throughout the long day, made longer from being cooped up in that dismal hole, but he longed for the hour when he should feel the sea breeze fanning his brow as he trod the smack's deck.

Several hours after dark his host led him from the house to the side of the water, where they entered a small boat and pulled away from the shore. As good fortune had it they no sooner flashed some gunpowder in a pan than they saw the thing repeated not far distant.

It was the smack, on board of which Ned found himself ten minutes later.

His recent host gave the captain a package, and then pulled ashore again.

"Ha!" exclaimed the captain, as he was reading by the swinging lamp in the cabin; and turning to a man in waiting he exclaimed: "Go on deck at once and keep a sharp lookout; they have a man-o'-war cruising outside the Boston harbor!"

The night was dark, very dark, and it was impossible to see ten feet ahead, so they proceeded cautiously.

Ned's letter was read and the captain told him to make himself at home for the present; he would assign him a position as soon as possible.

So Ned went on deck, and was walking backward and forward, when suddenly a low cry of alarm from the lookout rang along the deck.

"The man-o'-war!"

That was the cry, and then a voice rang hoarsely out:

"Boat ahoy!" followed by a puff of flame and the roar of a cannon.

The captain was on deck ere this, and springing to the wheel, cried:

"Luff, steersman, luff!"

The smack came up in the wind, the boom darted like lightning across the deck, sweeping Ned into the sea, and then stood away, regardless of his cry for help.

CHAPTER XIII.

ADRIFF.

"Help!"

This was Ned's cry as he struck the water.

"Help!"

So he cried again when he arose to the surface after the plunge he had taken.

He could hear the grating of the iron ring along the traveler, and the metallic clank as the mainsail brought up, and then he saw the smack, with swelling canvas, dart away on another tack.

He was left to his fate.

And that fate! He turned pale, for the heavy man-of-war was bearing down upon him.

He could see her black hull, with its towering clouds of canvas above, and could hear the waters surging and fretting beneath her bows.

He knew not what to do.

A merciful Providence alone saved Ned's life.

A 'cat's-paw, as the sailors call it—a brisk puff of wind caused the man-of-war to swing off a few points, and ere

she could be brought back to her course Ned had been left behind.

The bows had sprung past him at a distance of a few feet, and as the vessel's waist passed he might have touched it with his outstretched hand.

He breathed easier now, and, his own immediate danger being passed, he thought of the smack.

As long as he could distinguish the positions of the two vessels by the canvas he kept his eyes fastened on them, and even then he continued gazing in the direction where they had disappeared.

Then he heard the low booming of a gun, and knew that the man-of-war was giving a peremptory signal for the smack to halt.

But by this time his own condition began to claim his serious attention, for he was rapidly becoming numb and stiff.

That deadly numbness continued to grow upon him, and at last he felt himself slowly sinking.

He could no longer maintain himself, his exertions being too feeble.

The end seemed at hand.

Still he battled bravely.

He struggled to the surface even after he had sunk, and spitting the salt water from his mouth, glanced hopefully around.

He was sinking again.

His shoulders were already submerged, when his eyes encountered a dark object as it arose to the crest of the wave.

Another struggle, he waited with eager, expectant gaze to see it rise again. It did so, and a hopeful cry escaped his lips.

It was but a few feet away, and toward it he battled with might and main.

He reached it, clasped it, and a faint cheer arose to his lips.

Several minutes later he managed to fling himself and crawl upon it, and sat astride of a water-cask, which he rightly guessed had been flung from the smack's deck.

His heart glowed with warm feelings as he murmured:

"Then they did not altogether forget the poor Irish gosssoon, nor fail to heed his cry."

Still his danger was imminent, for it needed constant exertion to maintain his position on the cask, which was continually rising and falling on the waves, and, indeed, had the sea been less calm he could not have retained his place at all.

But there he clung, his pale face lighted with a hopeful smile, while he muttered to himself:

"Faith, Ned Nolan, but you're a lucky dog! The powers must be savin' o' you to stretch Irish hemp," and then, when day began to break, he looked long and searchingly across the waste of waters in search of the smack.

The smack meanwhile had been showing the man-of-war the quality of her heels.

The prompt action of Yankee Davis in bringing her about and putting off on another tack had saved her, for this gave the smack a free wind on the quarter—her best sailing point.

Several shots from the war vessel went hurtling through her rigging, but without doing serious harm, and then the smack ran out of gun-shot.

After a long run, when Yankee Davis felt it would be safe to do so, he tacked again, and, unheard and unseen by the cruiser, retraced her course.

It was a bold move, as if they had been discovered it would most likely have resulted in their capture; but the commander of the smack was a fearless fellow, who rather liked the smell of gunpowder, and would not have objected to a brush with the English any time.

The royal cruiser bowled on the course the smack had first laid out, and kept closely to it until after daybreak, when, finding himself alone, her commander smelt the rat and suspected the ruse that had been played on him, so he put about and tacked back toward Boston harbor.

Meanwhile the smack had kept well in the offing until near the point where Ned had been lost, when she stood inshore.

"It's no use attempting to land our cargo, for it's nearly daylight now," Davis mused. "We'll run along and see if we can see that careless Irishman."

Yankee Davis was a thorough seaman and perfectly acquainted with the tides and winds of the coast, which enabled him to make a calculation as to how far Ned would have drifted from the position where he had gone overboard, and when nearing the calculated spot Yankee commanded a sharp lookout to be kept, although he had but the barest hope of ever seeing Ned again.

Day had just broken, when, as he paced the deck, he was startled by hearing a faint, distant:

"A-hoy!"

A glass revealed a dark object in the water. The smack bore down upon it and Ned was taken on board.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CROWN DETECTIVE.

"Hi declare, this his ha bloomin' houtrage!" cried the landlord to the soldier with whom he had been hobnobbing, when they turned from the door of the inn and paused beside the body of the unconscious detective.

They lost no time in endeavoring to restore him to consciousness, but did not succeed for a long while, as Ned's blow had been no light one.

When the detective first opened his eyes he stared blankly around and looked wonderingly at the landlord and the soldier for several successive minutes.

Then he gazed at his surroundings, and finally saw the pewter mug with which he had been struck.

The sight of this seemed to afford him the clew that he was struggling to obtain, for his eyes glared with rapidly-coming intelligence, and he betrayed his complete knowledge of what had occurred when he hissed:

"Curse him, he's escaped me!"

"Who?" queried the interested landlord.

"None of your business!" growled Biddle. "If you'd been here in your bar attending to your business I wouldn't have this," and he laid his hand on his head.

When he saw the blood that smeared his fingers he sharply asked:

"Is it much of a cut?"

"No," was the landlord's reply; "a bad bruise, but not cut much."

Biddle's brows were contracted for a minute in thought, and then, hastily rising, he hurried out and to the prison.

Here he found things in a perfect uproar, for the alarm had just been given.

The guard in the cell had awakened from that strange sleep, and finding his prisoner gone, had uttered a cry of surprise and fear. Hurrying downstairs he found the guard prone and senseless.

Just at this juncture the relief-guard put in an appearance, and between them they soon had the neighborhood aroused.

Biddle forced his way to them and cursed them roundly for suffering the prisoner to escape.

A searching-party was soon organized and started out, but, of course, returned without having accomplished anything.

Both of the guards were court-martialed and punished severely for this escape of the Irish lad, but that did not put him in their hands again.

The detective had naught for it but to trace up Ned if he wished to have him once more in his power, and if this was once accomplished—the detective grimly compressed his lips, which silent movement was expressive of volumes of spoken words.

One thing that puzzled Biddle very much was Ned's having foretold of his escape and fulfilling his promise to claim the wager.

"He must have had help," thought Biddle, "and, moreover, knew that it was coming at that precise time. Now, who could have helped him? Of course, somebody inimical to the king—by George, the smugglers!"

He proceeded to put two and two together, as the saying goes, and decided that his sudden inspiration was well grounded.

In the first place, as Burton had informed him, Ned had escaped them on the night of the murder in the inn by suddenly disappearing when they had him cornered in the cul de sac.

And it was to this spot the soldiers had traced him on the night of his fooling the guard and subsequent capture. By inquiring the detective learned that the upper end of the court was inhabited by several families who were intensely patriotic; so from these things he formed his conclusions, and he forthwith took up a reconnaissance of the place.

During this he, for the first time, caught a sight of Oscian, and something in his dark, mysterious way aroused Biddle's suspicions of him.

Biddle saw Oscian leave the court early on the evening of the encounter between the smack and the cruiser, and followed him quite a distance; then Oscian seemed to become aware of his presence, and Biddle could see that the other was trying to drop him—which he finally did, despite the detective's utmost efforts to prevent it.

It was in the quarter of the town where Captain Gid Arnow lived, and having mistrusted him, Biddle concluded that thither it was the intention of the shadowed man to go.

He did not see Oscian enter, neither did he see him leave; yet, of a sudden, from his place of concealment he saw a lithe, dark figure glide past which he at once recognized.

Practicing the utmost caution, he followed Oscian, saw him reach the water-side and enter a slight skiff, and then, by straining his gaze, could faintly see a dark body gliding over the water, which he knew to be Oscian in the skiff, though no sound of creaking oars came to his ears, for the row-locks were muffled.

Biddle eagerly sought for and finally found a light row-boat, in which he followed the course taken by Oscian, which the detective thought was a straight line toward the lighthouse.

The detective rowed hard, but saw nothing further of Oscian, and, finally pulling back to the shore, laid in wait at the point where the skiff had been tied.

As the reader will surmise, Oscian was going to the lighthouse. Noiselessly he glided over the water, looking like some black shadow, his dark clothes and dark-painted skiff scarce distinguishable from the gloom-covered water on which he rode.

Shadow-like still he reached the lighthouse.

Once more he made the perilous ascent to the platform outside of the lantern, and then, carefully obtaining a position where he could remain unseen, he fastened his eyes on the inmates of the place.

Soon they were enthralled in a terrible spell, and Oscian glided in.

His first care was to screen the light, as we saw him do on a former occasion, and then, sitting down before the motionless figures of those whose duty it was to guard the light, he gazed long and earnestly at them, his eyes scintillating with a strange, feverish light.

His lips opened; he spoke, soft and low.

"John Sterling!"

"Aye, aye!" came the low, dull response.

"You saw the cruiser leave the harbor?"

"Yes," was the reply, with a vacant expression.

"Is she on the coast?"

"She is."

"Running off and on?"

"Yes."

"In quest of the smugglers?"

"Yes."

"And to watch the light, that your assertion that it is never out may be proved?"

"Yes."

"Is that all?"

"That is all."

A low, purring sound that broke with horrible chill on the ear emanated from Oscian's throat and continued for some time.

Suddenly he bent his head and listened.

"'Tis useless waiting longer," he muttered. "That is surely the far-away sound of a gun. The smack cannot run in to-night."

Taking down the screen he had put up he glided out of the lantern. When he was once more in his skiff he pulled rapidly for the point where the smack was accustomed to "lay to" to deliver her cargo.

There he found the boats waiting.

"Ahoy!" cried a voice he recognized as Captain Gid's.

"Ahoy!" he replied, in an equally low and cautious tone.

"What's the time of night?"

"Twelve o'clock!"

"And——"

"All's well!"

"Is that you, Oscian?"

"Yes."

"What's up?"

"There is no use in waiting longer. A cruiser is running off and on the harbor. She has sighted the smack and is giving her chase."

"How do you know?"

"I heard the sound of a gun."

"Then you advise putting back?"

"I do."

"Very well; so it shall be. Back water—get away!" and the smugglers, bidding Oscian good-night, pulled away in the darkness.

Oscian took another course, and in due time landed at the place whence he had started, and when once ashore walked briskly along toward the southern outskirts of Boston, followed by Biddle, who was debating in his mind what course to pursue, when he heard footsteps coming from the opposite direction.

It was Captain Burton, who sharply glanced at Oscian as he passed him.

Biddle recognized him instantly, and in low and hurried tones related his suspicions.

"Take him prisoner, of course!" exclaimed Burton. "Suppose we are mistaken, he can't do anything."

Burton knew where the pickets were posted, and by a roundabout course intercepted Oscian, who suddenly and un-

expectedly found himself surrounded by a number of red-coats.

It required no great penetration to understand the situation, which he accepted calmly, and silently accompanied his captors to a low, one-story house where the relief pickets were quartered, where he was left in their charge, after having been disarmed, Biddle and Burton not wishing to be bothered with him that night.

CHAPTER XV.

A STRANGE DEPARTURE.

When the pickets found themselves alone with Oscian they began to taunt him by calling him "a Yankee rascal," an "unwashed American," and divers other such humorous appellations.

Oscian made no reply, but at last raised his downcast eyes and fastened them on one of those who had been foremost in taunting him.

The fellow instantly closed his mouth, the color forsook his face, and he uttered no further taunting words, but applied himself to his pipe and the game of cards in which he was engaged.

At first they pretended to keep up a sort of guard on Oscian, but presuming on the good-nature of the petty officer who had them in charge, they locked the door and then all joined in the bout.

Oscian arose from the wood on which he had been seated and commenced slowly pacing the floor, which his captors did not interrupt his doing.

Finally he drew a cigar from his pocket, with the remark: "Any objections to my smoking?"

"No; go ahead."

Lighting it in the most nonchalant manner, he resumed his walk, slowly passing to and fro, winding in and out among the little groups into which the men had gathered. And as he walked he kept glancing up at the face of an enormous clock that solemnly ticked out the passing seconds.

"What are you watchin' the clock so close for?" inquired the petty officer, finally observing his action.

Oscian turned on him a grave look.

"Because," he replied, "when that clock strikes the hour of two I shall suddenly disappear."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the officer. "Take French leave, you mean?"

"No; I mean disappear."

"How?"

"Mid fire and smoke."

At that time superstition held sway over the people to a greater extent than now, and Oscian's dark face and strangely glowing eyes, combined with his mysterious words and manner, were sufficient to cause those who heard him to shiver, if not to regard him as something uncanny.

But common sense had already begun to dispel the superstitious mists of the dark ages, and the petty officer, feeling it would be sinking himself to the level of his men to possess the same fears that they did, affected to treat the matter with contempt.

"Very well; we'll be very glad to witness so extraordinary a disappearance. I'm glad you warned us in advance. Why, it wants only ten minutes of two now—but and deal there, we've just time for another hand."

Oscian bowed gravely.

"You may scoff," he said, in a smooth, purring voice, "but see if I have not told the truth."

Tick—tick, loud and solemn went the clock, and in this manner slowly told off the minutes.

It wanted five minutes of two.

It wanted four minutes of two.

It wanted three minutes of two.

Then only two remained.

Then only one.

The officer was interested in his hand, and time had fled more rapidly than he thought.

He was recalled suddenly.

Whir-r-r-r-r!

Thus spun the wheels of the clock, and then the bell struck—one—two!

While the sound still trembled a wild, unearthly wail rang out, they saw their prisoner fall to the floor, and then—

A long, continued, terrifying hiss, fire flashed up and ran in zig-zag lines, darting hither and thither between their very feet, clouds of sulphurous smoke meanwhile filling the room.

Hiss—flash—hiss—flash!

Wild yells of terror.

Screams of pain as the leaping fire licked somebody's flesh.

One last hiss, a column of flame darting up to the very ceiling, another low, unearthly wail, a crash, and they were left strangling in the smoke.

Some one reached the door and opened it, and they rushed outside, gasping for breath.

In a few minutes they venture inside, but only to find that their prisoner had indeed vanished.

Oscian's prophecy had been fulfilled.

The affair reached the ears of the detective, and mystified him dreadfully, but of one thing he became positive in his mind—that Oscian was in league with the smugglers and that he had been to the lighthouse the night before, for the man-of-war put into the harbor during the day and reported the lighthouse as having suddenly become dark; "which," said the captain, "convinced me that the smugglers were about to land, and I found this idea a correct one, for I encountered their vessel soon after," proceeding to give a detailed account of the meeting and fruitless chase.

Biddle kept close watch in the neighborhood of the cul de sac, but failed to see Oscian again, and for the simple reason that Oscian was safely housed at Captain Gid's.

"They are after us with a sharp stick," said Captain Gid, when Oscian had related the story of his capture, and then he laughingly added: "But your escape beats the Dutch all hollow. But now, what about the smack?"

"We'll hear from her during the day, I think," replied Oscian.

And he judged rightly.

After Ned was picked up the smack ran into a little cove where she was sheltered from observation, and from there dispatched a man to Boston, saying they would run in during the coming night.

Oscian sent back word to depend no longer on the darkness of the lighthouse as a signal of safety, but for Yankee Davis to use his own judgment.

The cruiser was on and off that night, but by hugging the shore the smack got past her unobserved, and the boats being in waiting was quickly unladen.

"Captain Arnow," called Ned, as they were about to separate.

"Aye, aye!"

"Me compliments to yer jewel of a daughter."

"Aye, aye!" was the reply. "You're off for New York now, Captain Davis?"

"Yes."

"Good luck attend you. Give way, my hearties!"

The smack eluded the cruiser's vigilance, and following the coast, entered Long Island Sound.

After a swift run they reached Randall's Island, just above Hell Gate.

At the date of which we write there was but little navigation on the Sound, and few understood the intricacies of passing Hell Gate, then more than doubly as dangerous as at the present day.

At that time Randall's Island was devoid of population and houses, save a rude hut on its eastern shore, and a bronzed and weather-beaten man who followed the vocation of a Hell Gate pilot.

A tin horn brought the pilot out, and entering his light skiff he pulled out to the smack, and, boarding her, conducted her in safety past the Frying-pan Shoals, Hog's Back, Mill Rock, and other perilous points of the passage, when, entering his skiff, he pulled back to his home on the island.

The smack put on an innocent character, and the next few days lay at a pier near Wall Street, taking aboard her cargo, during which Yankee Davis was quietly laughing in his sleeve and gazing contemptuously toward a king's cutter which lay swinging at anchor a short distance down stream.

One day a letter was hurriedly thrust into the hand of Yankee Davis; he tore it open.

"Your character is discovered. Some one has proved treacherous. Fly, or you will be seized. A Friend."

He summoned the crew, explained everything in a short sentence, and then ordered them to cast loose and hoist sail.

This was scarcely more than done, and the breeze had only just begun to swell the sail, when a posse of men rushed down the wharf.

Too late! The smuggler was off!

But not too late for the cutter to follow.

They saw her sails unfolded and spread out to the breeze, saw the cable slipped, and the cutter forge ahead in the water.

The exciting chase was fairly commenced.

The smack held her own, and Yankee Davis was exulting in the probability of escape, when a thought occurred to him—how could they pass Hell Gate without a pilot?

He groaned, and it rose from his very heart. They were caught like a rat in a trap. A cutter in the way of reaching the open sea, and to pass Hell Gate without a pilot was almost certain destruction.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH.

"All hands stand by!"

"Home with the sheet!"

"Hard down, there!"

"Ah! she catches the wind now," muttered Yankee Davis to himself, when his rapidly given orders had been obeyed, and the smack went dancing up the East River, the king's cutter forging ahead in pursuit, her guns speaking in tones of menace.

The face of Yankee Davis was pale with excitement.

The latter he curbed with an iron hand, and jumping into the shrouds, where he could clearly see all that was transpiring, he kept a close watch on the cutter and on the course before him, only breaking the silence now and then to give some low order.

When they passed the point where Grand Street now is, they were separated by a quarter of a mile or less, and the cutter seemed to be gaining.

"Ha!" exclaimed Davis, when the guns remained silent, "the blasted Englishman is so sure of taking us that he won't run the risk of injuring his prize. Well, let him come!" and the Yankee gritted his teeth.

Such really were the Englishman's thoughts.

He saw the smack was losing ground, and calculated that he would surely overhaul her in a short while, so had given orders to run in the guns.

But he would not have been so confident had he known the quality of the man he had to contend with, a man who would as soon have drowned himself or blown up his vessel as to have it fall in the hands of the English.

The wind freshened a little, and changed a point or two, which was all in favor of the smack, who began to display her heels of liveliness.

"I believe we could run away from him now," said Yankee Davis to his first mate. "We could give him the slip but for Hell Gate."

"He won't corner us before we reach it, at any rate."

"No."

"Will you try to go through without a pilot?"

"I see no other way," said Yankee, gloomily. "I wonder if he's got a pilot on board?"

"I don't think so; he slipped his cable and got under way too quickly to admit of procuring one. They're not as plentiful as huckleberries, you know."

"True," was the rejoinder. "What think you, do we gain?"

"No."

"Lose?"

"No, I should say we kept our distance."

"If we can do that I shall not grumble," remarked Yankee.

The breeze was coming up fresher every minute, and they were favored by the swift tide of the East River, and at length there could be no doubt that they were slowly gaining, widening the distance between themselves and the cutter.

The smack danced onward like a thing of life, the wooded shores of Manhattan Island and the low level of Long Island flitting past like dim ghosts.

Blackwell's Island was ahead.

A moment's hesitation, and then Yankee chose the channel to the west of it; and in his footsteps the cutter closely followed.

On—on—in a few minutes more the game must be lost or won; on—on—until above the low point of land Mill Rock could be seen rearing its frowning head; on—on—until the point was reached, and the dangerous pass lay before them.

As the smack was brought closer to the wind she almost stopped for several minutes, during which the cutter had been bowling along toward them, and now, with her towering clouds of canvas and the frowning muzzles of her guns, seemed like some rapacious eagle about to swoop down on its defenseless prey.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the English captain; "it is as I expected. The fellow's got no pilot and dares not try Hell Gate," and he rubbed his hands with satisfaction. "We've got him now, sure! That's splendid, for we've no pilot either. On deck there!"

"Aye, aye!"

"That fellow may attempt to escape by coming about and tacking down the other channel. If he does, give him a shot!"

"Aye, aye!"

Presently the captain gasped with astonishment and then began giving his orders right and left.

The smack's intentions were too plain to be mistaken she was going to attempt the passage.

Yankee Davis saw that no other avenue of escape was left and with pale face, stern with resolution, he quietly gave the order:

"Starboard the helm; haul in the mainsail nearly flat!"

He stationed Ned in the waist, and then gliding forward to the bowsprit, passed out on it, and there hung while keenly scrutinizing the seething mass of water, rushing to and fro in troubled confusion.

As we have said before, he was a thorough seaman, and the very color of the water to his practiced eye was an indication of its depth.

"Luff a little!" he called, and Ned repeated it to the steersman.

The smack's prow at one bound was within the boiling flood, and stout hearts turned faint at sight of the water-dogs, black and slimy, poking up their heads all about them, to strike one of which meant total destruction.

They were indeed within the jaws of death.

A silence that was awful and solemn in its nature settled over the vessel, and gliding to their posts each man stood at it with bated breath.

The creaking of the rigging and the churning of the waters were the only sounds to be heard.

Suddenly came the order:

"Let the jib go—starboard your helm, quick, for your life!"

The smack's head came around like a flash, and then they trembled while they waited the result, which came an instant later; a long, low, terrible grinding noise, then they floated free again, and the men breathed easier.

The perspiration was dripping from the face of Yankee Davis.

He glanced down on the black reef which had suddenly loomed up ahead and upon which they would have dashed but for his timely command, and upon which, as it was, the smack had ground sideways.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "that was close; another inch of draught and it would have ripped our bottom clean out. Up with the jib, lively! Port your helm!"

Boom—boom!

The Englishman's cannon began to speak again, for the captain of the cutter began to fear his intended prey would escape, but the balls passed harmlessly by, for just then the jib swelled before the breeze, and the smack darted forward like an arrow sped from the bow.

On—on, mid the foaming waters; on—on, the channel growing wider, the Hog's Back left behind, the Frying-pan well to the left hand; on—on, and the color came back into the face of Yankee Davis, for he felt that the peril was over.

On—on, and the cutter, following in the smack's wake, essayed the passage.

The cannons spoke in thunderous tones once more, then came a heavy shock, an awful crash; the cutter's progress was cut off sharp, and her tall masts snapped and went by the board.

Instantly ensued a scene of the wildest confusion; and as the cutter commenced settling in the water those on board the smack could see her crew rushing to the boats for safety.

In two minutes all was over.

The beautiful cutter lay an abandoned wreck, and her crew were pulling hither and thither in the seething whirlpool, seeking a channel deep enough to reach the shore.

The smack swept on, and in a few minutes the peril was all past.

They had come out of the jaws of death!

They could now afford to take things easy, and accordingly did so, arriving off the coast of Cape Cod after a good run. Rounding the cape, they entered the bay, and during the night began skirting the coast.

Before daylight they ran into a little cove some miles south of Boston. They dropped anchor behind a projecting headland that effectually screened them from observation from the bay.

During the day they were hailed from on shore, and Pierre showed himself on the narrow beach, and a small boat being sent for him, came on board.

Yankee Davis told him what had happened, and inquired if the warning that had reached him so opportunely came from Boston.

"It did not," said Pierre; "we had no knowledge of it. The traitor, if any, and the person who warned you must both belong to New York. I'll attend to the matter at once. We half expected you would arrive to-day and that is why I came here. Will you run in to-night?"

"What do you think about it?"

"Well, the cruiser still stands on and off, and is likely to do so for some time to come; you might as well venture now as any other time."

"We'll be there to-night, then."

"Any special news?"

"No."

"Then I'll be getting back, for I have not much time to spare."

On being set ashore, Pierre at once disappeared, and hurrying to Boston, visited Captain Gid and informed him of the smack's arrival, after which, darkness coming on, he went to Smuggler's Island to bid the men to be in readiness for the unloading of the vessel.

Returning to the mainland he visited the house whose back opened on the cul de sac, and there found Oscian, to whom he also imparted the news.

Oscian remained silent for some time, and then he said, in a low tone:

"Do you remember what to-day is the anniversary of?"

"I do; the taking of an oath."

"Which we are——"

"Accustomed to repeat on each recurring anniversary."

"Then let us kneel."

They knelt down, face to face, left hands clasped, each holding in his right a keen dagger whose point he pressed against the other's throat.

And then in concert they slowly and solemnly repeated:

"I, Pierre—I, Oscian—on our bended knees, as we once knelt beside the grave of our murdered father, swear by high heaven to avenge his untimely death on the heads of those who represent his murderer, England and her friends.

"He was carried away from his home, his children likewise, and were scattered to the four winds of heaven; he died in the wilderness, from starvation, and God directed us to the spot to meet them, for the first time in years, and to there take upon ourselves the solemn vow to never rest while life remained, to stifle all feelings of love for human kind, to have only one object, and that to injure the power of those who swept him and his family from the earth. These knives at our throats was the sign of our oath, and we hereby demand of each other to plunge deeply the blade into the throat of him who first shows any sign of wavering from the task—Amen!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LANDING OF THE GOODS.

Captain Burton and the detective had several long conversations about the mysterious disappearance of the captive they had left at the guard-house, but at their conclusion were just as much in the dark as to how it had been accomplished, though neither of them accepted the view of the pickets who had witnessed the affair, which was that Oscian was something supernatural, or in league with the Evil One.

"He's flesh and blood, I'll swear; for I had hold of him," said Biddle.

"Flesh and blood he is, of course," assented Burton.

"But there was something mysterious about him."

"So there was."

"Did you notice his eyes?"

"Yes, bright as a sea-coal fire."

"He had a dark way about him, too," mused the detective.

"But he was a human being, for all that. Strange, though, that I did not see him leave Arnow's house."

"I don't think so," said Burton.

"Of course not; you think Arnow is a royalist to the backbone, but I don't."

"I know it."

"And would add, are sorry for it."

"So I am."

"For Miss Stella's sake!" laughed Biddle.

Burton colored.

"Have you made a conquest in that quarter?" laughed Biddle, sarcastically.

The captain evidently did not relish this badinage.

"Leaving her out of the question entirely, I don't think he is in league with the smugglers. 'Cause why? Colonel Brown and myself were there one night when they ran in."

"That's right," sneered Biddle; "stand up for your father-in-law."

"He ain't that yet."

"No, nor ain't likely to be."

"Why?"

"Because if I have a mind I can put a stop to it," and Biddle leered at him with a show of power that Burton dared not gainsay; he fidgeted uneasily for a minute, and then replied:

"I thought you promised never to refer to that again."

"Who is referring to it?" retorted Biddle. "No one but yourself."

Burton swallowed the lump in his throat, and made no answer, but breathed more freely when the detective was gone.

Left to himself he pondered over the detective's assertions of belief that Captain Gid Arnow was not as innocent as he might be in regard to the doings of the smugglers.

"I'll not believe it," he muttered, "not until I have some stronger proof than that."

He visited Stella that evening, and she played her cards so nicely that Burton returned to his quarters more convinced than ever that the ban of suspicion hung unjustly over Captain Gid's head.

What a revelation it would have been to him could he have seen Stella closeted with her father after his departure, retelling at length the conversation between her and himself, in which he had, without intending it, betrayed enough of the plans to which he was privy to effectually prevent their being successful.

Nearly every day he went to the house of the Arnows now, and it began to be whispered that he was over head and ears in love with the fair American girl.

He was there the evening of the intended landing of the smack's contraband goods.

Captain Gid regarded Burton's visits as one of the best means of quieting suspicions concerning himself, and always took pains to be ever present or near at hand when Burton was there.

So when it became necessary that some one should go to pilot the boats, it was Stella that was to go.

Excusing herself at ten o'clock, but begging the captain not to go yet, Stella left the parlor, and after some hasty preparations started on her mission, leaving Burton and her father in company, together with her mother and a young lady from a house but a few yards distant.

At about eleven o'clock, there came a hasty knock at the door, and inquiry for Captain Burton.

Answering it in person, a letter was thrust into his hand.

"It came a few minutes ago," said the bearer, "and I hastened right here with it; the person who brought it is waiting."

Burton broke the seal, and read the few lines the letter contained, his face lighting with joy.

"Duty calls!" he exclaimed, rushing back to the parlor. "You will excuse me!" and seizing his hat he hurried away to his quarters, where he found awaiting him a tall, well-built man, who sat gazing restlessly and nervously about him.

"You are the man spoken of in this letter?"

"I am."

"The one who gave the information to the cutter in New York?"

"Yes."

"You started on horseback for Boston as soon as you heard of the cutter's mishap in Hell Gate?"

"I did."

"You were one of the smugglers once, this letter says."

The man glanced nervously around, and then replied in the affirmative, and in a conversation that followed agreed to play the traitor for a sum of money to him in hand paid.

Half an hour later Burton hurried to the water-side, and calling out a dozen soldiers from a picket-house, had them man two boats, and at once pulled out into the bay.

Meanwhile the smack had not been idle; hauling out of her cover some time after dark, she was laid on a straight course for Boston light.

By keeping close in shore and displaying no lights, the smack ran but little danger of discovery by the cruiser, whose light Yankee Davis saw about ten o'clock several miles away over the quarter.

He proceeded with more confidence, now that he knew the vessel's position, and giving the smack the advantage of the wind at her best point, Boston light soon rose above the horizon.

When several miles from it the crew of the smack saw it suddenly vanish.

"Ha!" exclaimed Yankee Davis, "things are running smoothly again."

"Where did the light beyant go to?" asked Ned.

"That's a mystery," returned the man addressed. "We even don't know that it is a signal of safety, and that the boats will be there to meet us. Oscian is at the bottom of it, though, I am sure."

Ned could not repress an involuntary shudder at mention of the name of the mysterious Oscian, and, as he had often before, he murmured:

"Faith, he's a strange chap. God grant he may never be me enemy."

The smack soon changed her course, and presently the sails were let run, the little vessel hove to and lay idly drifting with the current, when out of the darkness came two heavy boats.

"What's the time of night?" called Yankee Davis.

"Twelve o'clock!"

"And——"

"All's well!"

The boats reached the smack's side and while they were all busy unloading and transferring the contraband goods Yankee Davis was engaged in conversation with Stella, who was standing in the prow of the boat she guided.

Half the work had been accomplished, when Yankee Davis started as he raised himself erect to scan the dark surface beyond him. He saw a light, and quickly cried:

"It's the cruiser tacking back! We must be on our guard!"

Even as he spoke he saw one reason for alarm, for a rocket went hissing high in air from the cruiser's deck.

"It's a signal of some kind," said Yankee, earnestly. "Lively there; my hearties; that means something!"

So it did; and Burton knew its meaning full well.

"Give 'way, there, double quick!" he shouted. "There goes a rocket, a signal that the lighthouse is in darkness and that the smugglers are around. Give 'way—faster there—and keep your arms handy!"

Although they did not know it, they were hard on the smugglers even then, and soon Yankee Davis heard the sound of their oars in the rowlocks.

"We are in a trap!" he called out. "There are boats inside of us, and the cruiser between us and the sea. I'm sorry, Miss Stella," he cried, earnestly. "I hope no harm will come to you. Will you trust yourself in the boats, or come on board the smack?"

"I'll stay by the boats."

"Very well. All hands make sail—lively, there, the English are down upon us. Haul away, let every inch of canvas draw!"

With a rush the men were at their posts working with a will.

"To your places!" cried Stella. "Get ready to give way!"

A sullen, booming sound floated from seaward, and then a dozen English throats poured forth a stentorian huzza, for the soldiers under Burton at that moment saw the outlines of the smack and the boats before them.

"A strong pull and we've got them!" shouted Burton.

"Give way, Miss Stella, for God's sake!" cried Yankee Davis; "the cruiser is standing inshore."

Stella, still standing, placed her hands against the smack's gunwale to push away so as to give her men a chance to use the oars. At the same instant the smack swung away, and the impetus of her push carried her forward and headlong into the water.

A shrill cry from the men on board the smack, but which was not understood by the men in the long boat, whose backs being toward the prow did not see what had happened, and then they separated, leaving Stella to drown or float.

She uttered no cry for help, but let them go, murmuring:

"It is better so. If they paused, they would be captured. Better suffer myself than that!"

"Ship oars; arm—aim—fire!"

A volley of musketry rung in her ears as she sank.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRAITOR'S PLOT FOILED.

That report was the death-knell of one of the smugglers, who dropped his oar, uttered one faint moan, and fell back, dead.

His oar was quickly seized by another, and then they bent to the oars, until their sinews stood out on their arms like knotted whip cords, and the ashen blades bent until they cracked beneath the strain.

For one minute Burton glanced from the fleeing boats to the smack, undecided which to follow; then, thinking it better to take the smack, he gave the orders, the men dropped their smoking weapons and gave way rapidly.

That moment's decision saved the smack, for, even as the English sent their boats flying toward her, her sails were sheeted home, and the canvas began to belly out, after which she started away like a hound just slipped from the leash.

Quickly Burton saw how futile the chase would prove, and ordered the men to go about and give chase to the long boats.

They pulled in the new direction, passed within ten feet of Stella, who had just risen to the surface, without seeing her.

At almost the instant the smugglers stopped rowing and uttered a loud cry of sorrow and surprise.

They had just discovered Stella's absence.

A smile lighted her fair face as this cry came floating over the water to her ears, for it showed her that these men would not have deserted her had they known of her mishap.

And with it still ringing in her ears she sank again.

For a moment all was confusion in the boats of the smugglers, and then one man who had overheard the question of Yankee Davis, but had not caught Stella's spirited reply, said, in a tone of conviction:

"She's on board the smack. I heard Yankee Davis advise it!"

They grasped at this solution of the matter eagerly, and once more gave way. The fort was in sight; they were abreast of it, when its cannons spoke in tones of thunder.

There was no time for strategy now; it was a simple test of strength, and the strongest crew would win.

On—on—the balls flying all about them, a shell bursting almost above their heads.

On—on—the soldiers were gaining, their light boats more than counterbalancing the strength of the smuggler's arm when urging along their loaded boats.

They struggled pluckily, though every prospect was that of a losing game.

Nearer and nearer the redcoats drew, until scarcely a boat's length separated pursuers and pursued.

Then God's hand became visible in their behalf, as it was for years afterward, during the memorable struggle for Independence.

A ball that came howling from the fort plunged through one of the pursuing boats, which sunk like a shot, leaving its inmates floundering in the water.

It was Burton's boat.

Had it been the other he would have pursued and left the wretches to their fate, but when he was himself in danger, all thought of duty fled, and he called on the other boat to halt and take them up.

With a wild cheer the smugglers passed on their way, nor were they pursued further; and wiping the sweat from their faces they pulled more leisurely to the island, their faces grave and thoughtful as they pondered over Stella's absence.

They would not believe that she had met an unknown fate, but hugged the fact to their bosoms that she had sought refuge on the smack.

And how fared Stella?

But for her clothing spreading out she would never have reappeared at the surface after once sinking, but they buoyed her up, though they did not prevent her sinking a second time.

Ned Nolan had been one of the first to see the accident, and had rushed to the gunwale with the purpose of flinging himself overboard and attempting to save her, and would have done so had not a strong hand held him back.

"The boat will pick her up!" cried the person who was holding him back. "Watch and see."

Ned did watch, and saw the boats gliding away into the shadows, without attempting to save her.

"The omadhauns!" he angrily cried. "The cowardly bastards, to desert a woman in peril!"

He sprang away from the rail and hurried along the deck until he gained the stern and began rapidly undoing the ropes by which the small boat was hung.

He groaned audibly when he found himself delayed by the ropes being jammed.

"The jewel will be drowned!" he moaned. "Oh, purty eyes! God's blessings rest on ye, an' save ye from such a fate!"

He jammed his hand into his pocket and drew forth a knife, sprang into the light skiff, and with a cry of joy at finding the oars, in it, he drew his knife across the ropes.

As he heard the blocks creak with the running of the rope at one end, he sprang to the other and severed it at one stroke. By this means the skiff was made to strike the water squarely, instead of diving down one end first.

The pursuing boats had already started on their new course, and springing to the seat, Ned ran out the oars, saying:

"Purty eyes, where are ye—where are ye, purty eyes? I'm a-comin'—Ned Nolan will save ye, God helping him!"

He strained every nerve and muscle, and continued his cry of:

"Purty eyes, where are ye?" in a pathetic tone, while he eagerly scanned the water around him, while his heart was sinking as the conviction forced itself upon him that never more would the "purty eyes" smile upon him.

CHAPTER XIX.

NED SAVES STELLA.

"Purty eyes—purty eyes—where are you?"

"Here!" cried a low voice.

Ned jumped so quickly as nearly to pitch out of the skiff as he heard the reply, and then hastily sitting down he seized hold of the oars and sent the skiff flying toward Stella, who had just reached the surface after having sunk the second time.

Had she been less brave or possessed less presence of mind, she must ere this have found a watery grave.

Cool and collected from the first, she retained the use of her faculties, and each time that she sank seized the favorable moment for struggling to the surface.

The second rising was hard of accomplishment, and so nearly strangled was she that Ned's call had sounded in her ears a number of times ere she could free her mouth from water and give that low reply.

She managed to keep afloat during the time Ned was flying toward her in the skiff, and when he was about to shoot past, some feet away, she coolly called out and told him of his error.

In a twinkling the skiff's prow was brought about; one long, powerful reach with the oars then Ned flung them down, leaned over the side of the skiff and caught Stella's extended arm.

Another minute and she was safely in the skiff.

"Praises to the Blessed Virgin!" exclaimed Ned, thankfully. "Yer safe now, purty eyes."

"Thank God, yes!" she replied, in a low tone. "And you, Mr. Nolan—oh, how can I ever repay you for this service?"

"By sayin' nothing about it at all—at all," replied Ned, quickly. "Me own happiness that ye still live is more than pay enough."

"I will not say more, then, since you wish it. But my heart will ever remain warm toward my preserver," said Stella, slowly. "Let my father be the one to thank you."

"No!" exclaimed Ned. "But, Miss Stella, ye'll be after takin' cold, I'm afraid. Shall I set you ashore?"

"As you think best, Mr. Nolan."

"Mr. Le—" Ned was going to add something very forcible, but remembering he was speaking to a lady, he softened it into "Hanged! Me name's plain Ned Nolan, and I wish ye'd be after callin' me so."

"So I will, then—Ned," said Stella, her eyes lighting with gratitude toward the frank Irish youth.

Ned pulled a quick stroke, and sent the skiff flying toward Smuggler's Island, that being the nearest place where Stella could have the benefit of a fire.

The smugglers had already been hailed, and giving the password, had grounded their boats at the landing place.

"You were discovered!" cried a low voice. "What has happened?"

It was Captain Gid Arnow who spoke.

No sooner had the door closed on Captain Burton than he had seized his hat and hurried out into the night, fearful that in some way Burton's hasty departure was connected with the smugglers.

He was in concealment near by when Burton emerged from his quarters, and Captain Gid saw him enter with the soldiers. That something was wrong was very clear, and he determined to be on the scene if possible.

Hastening away, he took a small boat at the usual place and sent it flying across the harbor, and turned Smuggler's Island. Arriving there he found, as he expected he should, that the smugglers had been gone some time.

He was on the point of embarking to follow where they had gone, when the thunder of the fort's guns broke on the solemn stillness of the night.

"They have been discovered!" he exclaimed, in anxious tones. "I hope they will not be hit."

He fidgeted uneasily for a few minutes, undecided what to do, then sprang into his boat and began pulling away from the island; but a short distance had he accomplished when he heard the shout of derision the smugglers sent up as the soldiers were forced to give over the pursuit.

It proclaimed victory to those for whom he had been so anxious, and Captain Gid returned to the island and greeted the smugglers as recorded.

As they recognized his voice every man who heard him turned pale, for they anticipated his next question. In a forced tone the reply was given:

"We ran upon two boatloads of redcoats; they followed us up sharply, and one man was killed by a volley they poured into us."

Captain Gid's eyes roamed over them, scanning each and every form as closely as the darkness would permit, and then, while his heart suddenly ceased beating beneath an oppressive dread, the question came:

"Stella! Is she with you?"

For a moment they were all silent.

"Speak!" cried Captain Gid. "Has anything happened her?"

They explained things to him in as favorable a light as they could, and stoutly maintained that she had gone on board of the smack, but Captain Gid clearly saw that this belief was more what they wished to think the truth than what they really feared.

He questioned them sharply and learned in what position Stella had been last seen.

With a groan swelling his heart he moaned:

"She is dead! She must have fallen overboard!" and then bowed his head in grief.

"I do not blame you," he said, in a low tone, at last raising his head. "It was God's will!"

They commenced unloading the boats, and were thus engaged while Captain Gid sat on a boulder, around whose base the waves were rippling, buried in his sorrow, when the sentinel's keen eyes detected a black shadow gliding over the water.

"Who comes there?"

"A friend."

"What's the time of night?"

"Twelve o'clock."

"And——"

"All's well."

The skiff grated on the shore, Ned sprang out and assisted Stella to do the same.

A wild shout of pleasure burst from the sentinel's lips, and the smugglers first crowded forward, and then repeated it in good earnest.

"Careful!" said Captain Gid, in a warning tone. "You may be heard."

Stella knew the tone instantly, surmised the truth in regard to what her father had heard, and ere he could be told the meaning of that shout she was by his side, her arm was around his neck.

"Stella!" he cried, and then pressed her closely to his breast.

It took but a few minutes to explain matters, and then Captain Gid warmly wrung the hand of the brave Irish youth.

They ascended the rough path in company, and beside the fire Stella's clothing soon began to steam.

"You ought to have a change of clothes," her father said, anxiously.

"As I haven't," said Stella, "I suppose this will have to do."

"Begorra!" said Ned, suddenly, "I've an idea."

"What is it?"

"I've a fine suit of clothes beyant. Put them on while yer own are drying; I'll go down and keep the men away, so no one'll see yer but yer father."

Stella accepted the proposition, and Ned disappeared.

Her clothing dried quickly, and just as the first grayish haze, announcing the coming morning, appeared on the eastern horizon, Stella and her father reached home.

CHAPTER XX.

OSCIAN AT WORK.

The cruiser and the smack. Where were they all this time? The position of the latter was most desperate. Nevertheless, Yankee Davis was too good a sailor to be caught in a trap. By skillful manœuvring he managed to elude the cruiser and put out to sea.

Yankee Davis was more than pleased with the success of his escape.

They stayed out at sea until dark, when they returned to the cave.

The sails had hardly been let run when Pierre hailed.

A small boat which they carried on the fore deck was quickly slung and lowered into the water.

Two men entered it and pulled for the beach, arriving within a few feet of which, they were hailed.

"Boat ahoy!"

"Ahoy on shore. Who goes there?"

"A friend."

"Advance, friend, and give the time of night."

"Twelve o'clock!"

"And——"

"All's well."

Pierre jumped lightly into the boat, and a few steady strokes of the oar carried him to the smack's side.

In a minute he was on her deck confronting Yankee Davis, whose first question was in regard to Stella.

"Safe!" replied Pierre.

"And well?"

"Yes."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Yankee. "Only the kind hand of Providence could have permitted us all to escape!"

Pierre reverently bowed his head.

"Stella is safe!" Yankee cried to the eagerly expectant crew. "The young Irishman saved her life."

"He's a noble fellow!" cried one of the men, enthusiastically, and the rest caught up and repeated the sentiment.

"Come into the cabin," said Yankee Davis, leading the way, while Pierre followed.

Their situation was discussed pro and con, and it was finally decided to land the remainder of the cargo on the bleak and desolate shore a few miles south of Salem.

After a night had been decided on for the undertaking, Pierre returned to Captain Gid's, where another long consultation took place.

On a dark night the smugglers' smack skirted the coast, and landed the remainder of her goods at the spot agreed on by Yankee and Pierre.

From here they were conveyed to Smugglers' Island to await a favorable opportunity of running them into Boston.

The moon was on the wane, and at last it no longer brightened the gloom of night.

It was decided to seize the first good chance to run them in, and they only waited the appearance of one of the mysterious brothers with the necessary orders.

They came after many days of waiting, Pierre arriving from the mainland early in the night.

The light boats were got out, and the contraband goods were laboriously carried down the steep path to the shore.

Pierre superintended the work, and when it was nearly done, and Ned was about to ascend for his last load, the halfbreed handed him a letter.

By the aid of the light from the glowing embers of the fire Ned broke the seal and read:

"Dear Sir—You will probably be sent ashore with one of the boats to-night; if so, we should be pleased to have you come to see us—but be very careful, as the house is watched. Approach it from the back, where you will probably find Oscan in waiting for you. Yours very truly,

"GILSON ARNOW."

"P. S.—Stella sends her best wishes to you."

"Arrah! God bless her purty eyes!" exclaimed Ned, impulsively, overjoyed at thoughts of seeing the beautiful girl again.

He descended to the shore with the last load, and striding up to Pierre, asked:

"Am I to go ashore?"

"Yes; but you must be very careful. Do you think you can?"

"Faith, I know it."

"Very well."

Ned was the third to leave the island, and after a brisk pull across the bay drew near the city. A good memory of places enabled him to make his way to the mouth of the sewer with but little trouble, arriving there just as his predecessor was pulling away in his empty boat.

Ned was soon unloaded, after which he pulled his boat beneath a pier close by, and after a few minutes spent in reconnoitring, he fastened it and clambered upon the pier.

Carefully avoiding several sentinels in his way, he finally reached the street in the rear of Captain Gid's house.

He was but a short distance from it when, hearing a low cough near him he turned quickly to see a dark figure close beside him.

"Fire-devil fly away with ye!" he exclaimed. "Where did ye come from so suddint?"

Oscan laughed low and long, and then said:

"You're not as careful as I have no doubt you promised."

Pierre to be. Here you never knew of my presence until I could have touched you with my hand."

"Ye must be a cat," said Ned, with a little shiver of vague fear of the man beside him.

"Perhaps I am," was the low reply; "or, if not a cat, of the cat kind—say a tiger, thirsting for British blood."

His tone was savagely vindictive, though it was so low that Ned could scarcely hear what he said.

"Come!"

They entered the house by a back way, and the door had scarcely closed behind them when Ned's hand was grasped with a warm pressure by that of Captain Gid.

"Come into the parlor—they are waiting for you."

"Who?"

"Wait and see."

Within the parlor at that moment were gathered Mrs. Arnow, Stella, and a fine-looking lady of middle age, rather stout than thin, with a still fresh face, which, however, showed lines of deep trouble.

Their conversation was interrupted by the opening of the door and the appearance of Captain Gid and Ned.

The eyes of the young Irish lad first rested on Stella's face, and then they met those of the lady mentioned.

He started back, his lips parted as if he would have uttered a cry of astonishment, but could not. The lady first turned pale, and then the color flew to her face and she sprang forward, quivering with agitation.

"Mother!"

"Ned—my son!"

And they were clasped in each other's arms.

Captain Gid laughed with joy, while Mrs. Arnow and Stella showed their sympathy by the happy tears that flowed down their faces.

Ned could hardly believe his senses, and suddenly releasing his hold, held her at arm's length, looked at her, then excitedly cried:

"Yes, it is ye, and no mistake, mother," and strained her closely once more.

The Arnows were going to withdraw, but this neither mother nor son would hear of, and when they had grown a little calmer they all sat down and Ned learned how his mother came to be there.

She had arrived in Boston several days before, having come from home in search of him. While the vessel was lying at the dock, Captain Gid came on board and told her he knew of her son, and asked her to accept of his hospitality. Captain Gid explained his share in it by saying he had seen her name in the paper as a passenger, and remembering Ned's story, had jumped to the conclusion that it was his mother, which fact his visit verified.

Mrs. Nolan's eyes were lighted with honest pride as they rested on her noble-hearted boy, while she listened to Stella's story of what she owed him.

"Purty—purty eyes—be silent!" said Ned, coloring, "or I'll be afther tellin' what I know of you."

At a late hour he remembered that it was time to go, and parting from his mother with a warm embrace and a whispered remark that better and happier times were coming, he shook Mrs. Arnow and the captain by the hand, and then turned toward Stella. With an appealing look at her he slowly left the parlor.

She understood his look, and though much embarrassed by the situation, plucked up enough self-command to follow him out.

Ned caught her by both hands.

"Me mother!" he said, eagerly. "Ye will take good care of her?"

"I will."

"God's blessing on yer head, mavcurneen!" he cried, and

then, ere she could divine his intention, or prevent its execution, he boldly kissed her, pressed her hand warmly, and was gone.

Hurrying along, for it was very late, he reached the pier, and entered his boat.

He thought of a message to send to his mother.

"Faix, I'll just go into the sewer and ask somebody in the store to carry it for me."

A few strokes of the oars carried him to the mouth of the sewer, into which he stepped, only the next minute to have the light of a bull's-eye lantern thrown into his face; then followed a shout of joy, and Biddle, the crown detective, flung himself on Ned, and then commenced a savage struggle.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FIRST PRIVATEER.

For some weeks previous Biddle had gone upon the water every night in a small boat in the hope of encountering Ned Nolan, as well as in the hope of, by this means, finding some clew to the proceedings of the smugglers.

On this night, while slowly and noiselessly pulling about, he first heard and then saw the first boat that approached the sewer laden with goods. Watching her from a distance, he saw the man row away, to give place to another laden boat, and then he followed the first until he saw her land at the island.

Such a stroke of good fortune was almost incredible to himself, and he could hardly believe his senses; and yet he knew that it was an actual fact—that he possessed the secret of the smugglers.

He pulled back across the bay and lay watching the mouth of the sewer for a long time, the while pondering where the goods could be taken to through such a channel.

As it seemed all quiet and dark, he determined to investigate, and gliding to the mouth of the sewer he fastened his boat securely, as he thought, and entered.

Despite a prolonged and careful search and scrutiny, he was as much in the dark as ever as to what became of the goods after entering the sewer.

Puzzled thoroughly and completely, he closed the slide of the lantern and slowly approached the water, only to find that his boat was missing.

While he stood looking helplessly around he heard the dip of oars, and soon saw the dark outline of a boat advancing from beneath the pier.

Shrinking back he waited until the person had entered the sewer, when, flashing the bull's-eye upon him Biddle recognized Ned Nolan.

Dropping the lantern he sprang upon him with a cry of joy, at the same time snatching out a heavy pistol.

"Do you surrender, Ned Nolan?" he cried.

"Faith, I do not!" was the prompt reply. "Take that, ye dirty hound!" and Ned planted his clenched fist between Biddle's eyes.

"You Irish fiend!" hissed Biddle, hoarse with rage. "Try that again if you dare!"

A thrill went through Ned's frame as he felt a cold object touch his temple.

It was the detective's pistol.

He ceased struggling, for the stern voice of the detective left no doubt that he would carry out his threat.

"Do you surrender peaceably?" said Biddle, noticing Ned's sudden quieting down. "Ha! ha! I see you're like the rest of 'em; the touch of a pistol makes lambs out of the toughest of 'em."

He congratulated himself too soon, for during this time Ned's hand had been slowly stealing up, and the next instant it was darted forth, his fingers clutched the barrel and turned it aside, and then his other hand shot forth and lighted on Biddle's eyes, just as a report rumbled hollowly along the sewer.

Ned wrenched the pistol from Biddle's grasp as he was falling, and then flinging himself on the prostrate detective, he hit him a fearful clip with the heavy butt, which rendered him senseless.

A noise sounded overhead, and then a low voice called:

"What's the time of night?"

"Twelve o'clock."

"And——"

"All's well."

"What's the matter?" asked an anxious voice, and then the trap door opened and Pierre's face appeared.

Quickly Ned explained matters, after which they lifted Biddle up through the trap. He had every appearance of being dead, which caused Ned to feel down-hearted, for he wished not to have upon his conscience the death of even his bitterest enemy.

Watching a good opportunity, they carried the limp body into the street, and left it propped up in a doorway.

Ned then left the message for his mother, entered the boat and returned to the island.

Biddle was not dead, though they had left him in the doorway under that impression.

But he wandered in his mind and was very low on a sick bed for weeks; then consciousness returned, a change for the better took place, and strength rapidly returned.

When he became able to go about he informed Burton of what he had learned, and made arrangements with him to make a night attack on Smuggler's Island at no distant day.

Burton hastened to the general, thanked him for his kindness in so long delaying the execution of his threat, told him his hopes, and begged to be permitted to lead the attack.

"It shall be as you say," replied the general. "But, Captain Burton, attached to it is this responsibility: If you don't make good your word, if you fail in your undertaking, you shall be instantly court-martialed."

Burton hesitated, but no course was left open, and bowing humbly, he withdrew.

Meanwhile popular feeling was being aroused to a high pitch, and the premonitions of that terrible struggle, which soon after convulsed the country, were becoming too apparent for their meaning to be wrongfully taken.

One day a little boat shot across the bay and made straight for Smuggler's Island.

Its inmate was Pierre.

They listened to the story he told, at first with bated breaths and pale faces; but as he went on they drew their breath fast and thick through closed teeth, their cheeks glowed, their eyes sparkled with excitement.

The news he brought was of the battle of Lexington, the first open stroke for Liberty.

Night!

The smugglers were gathered about the fire, when a lithe figure suddenly appeared among them.

It was Oscian!

"To arms!" he cried, with glittering eyes. "The English are upon us!"

They armed themselves quietly, and then waited; they had no fear now of striking at the king's soldiers, for the glorious example had been set.

Oscian had removed the sentinel and left a boat to show them the way.

They heard the sound of oars, and then the soldiers dis-

covered the purposely left boat, and landed. They easily found the path and stole upward—to death and destruction!

When they least expected it a deadly volley swept down like grain before the mower's scythe, and another quickly following, left Burton and three others the only ones to reach their boats alive.

With a wild air and eyes glowing with fire, Oscian sprang to Pierre's side, and grasping each other's right hand they raised the left to heaven.

"The day of vengeance is dawning!" cried Oscian.

"Woe—woe to them all!"

The night wore on.

Oscian gathered the men.

"The English will seek to avenge this night. We must leave this place; it is no longer safe. In an hour the smack will be on and off the coast. To the boats! We will board her!"

They were on board the smack ere daylight, and the rising sun lighted up a strange scene.

Gathered on the deck, each man clasping another's hand, they took upon themselves an oath dictated by Oscian, who rechristened the smack the Rover, the first privateer to strike a blow on the sea against the king of England.

And that very night they crossed the track of a British vessel standing into Boston harbor with government supplies.

They hailed her as they passed, and then standing back ran like a race horse under her counter, as Yankee Davis gave the order:

"Stand by to board!"

"Keep off!" cried the English lookout. "Keep off! What's the matter?"

A wild shout was the reply, and then the privateersman—once smugglers—swarmed over the gunwale.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FIRST PRIZE.

Those on board the English vessel had not, of course, heard the news of Lexington, and consequently did not know that hostilities were fairly commenced.

Taken completely by surprise, they were poorly prepared for resistance, though they fought their best when called upon to do so by the captain, who had been asleep in the cabin, but had rushed on deck at the first note of the fray.

The English captain took them to be pirates, and seeing in Yankee Davis the leader of them, he aimed a heavy horse-pistol at his head. It was a critical moment in the smugglers' history, which must have ended there and then but for the timely interference of Ned, who chanced to see the action and felled the Englishman to the deck, thereby disconcerting his aim.

In ten minutes all opposition had ceased, and the prize was in their power.

Yankee Davis remained on board of the English vessel, leaving Ned and another conjointly in command of the smack.

Both vessels were securely ensconced in a cove between Boston and Salem, and some patriots of undoubted integrity being let into the secret, the vessel was unloaded of its various supplies and munitions of war, and it was not long afterward when the captured musket, in the hands of brave men, blazed and banged on Bunker Hill.

After the vessel was entirely unloaded the English, who had been kept close prisoners, were set on shore to make their way on foot to Boston, there to explain to the general in command the reason of their long-delayed and daily-expected arrival.

The captured vessel Yankee Davis turned over to a committee of prominent patriots, among whom was Captain Gid Arnow, to be put to the best use possible, and she afterward did excellent service in the cause of Liberty.

Then the smack stood out to sea and cruised in the track that vessels from England bound for Boston were likely to take, in hopes of falling in with another supply ship whose commander was ignorant of the state of affairs.

Good fortune attended the Rover, and within a fortnight her second prize was run in, advancing the patriots' cause, besides putting a goodly sum of prize money in the pockets of the privateers.

A secret ambition had risen in Ned's heart, and nearly all the day long he would be at the table in the cabin studying up the accurate charts of Yankee Davis.

Ned held an anomalous position on board the Rover. Being fully officered, he could not be an officer, and yet he was not one of the crew, for he had his berth in the cabin, and ate in the captain's mess.

He laughingly described himself as an honorary member of the service, more ornamental than useful.

But his usefulness was not long in coming to light.

Having perfected his knowledge of the coast, he took command of a lively-heeled craft of a few more tons burden than the smack, and soon recruited a brave and daring crew.

He and Yankee Davis sailed in company now and then, and worked in this wise when they fell in with a prospective prize under convoy of an English man-of-war.

While Ned lay in the offing Yankee would beat up from leeward and make as if about to swoop down on the merchantman.

Ten to one but the cruiser would give chase.

Yankee would decoy her on as far as he could, during which Ned would come down on a free wind, and swoop down on the unprotected vessel, conquer her crew, man her, and take to his heels.

In these escapades they were generally successful, for they would always select a time just before nightfall, with whose friendly aid, a good breeze and a superior knowledge of the tides and coast they would get away with their prize, run her to some place agreed upon, where the Rover would meet them.

This trick they repeated a number of times, until the English admiral, stung to the quick at being so easily fooled, gave strict orders that ships under convoy should never separate on any account whatever.

Their little game being spoiled by this order, Yankee Davis and Ned parted with the best of wishes, and thereafter during that long struggle each worked "on his own hook."

CHAPTER XXIII.

BURTON AND BIDDLE.

Burton and Biddle were among the survivors of that ill-fated expedition against Smugglers' Island, from which they returned to Boston crestfallen and ashamed.

It being necessary to report, Burton went to headquarters and informed the general of the result of the affair, laying the blame at Biddle's door in hopes of benefiting himself.

Much to his disgust, after listening to his story, the general called the orderly and bade him send in the corporal, in whose charge Burton was delivered, with orders to produce him before a court-martial to be held the next morning.

Biddle being sent for, was incensed at learning of Burton's attributing the failure to him, and appearing before the court-martial the next morning, showed his animosity by

boldly accusing the prisoner of being a robber from the government while taxgatherer.

Burton could not deny the charge, for that of cowardice and incompetency brought against him by the general, and with bowed head he heard sentence pronounced against him, and was sent in irons on board of the vessel that was to sail that day with dispatches to the king.

A heavily-armed force was sent against Smugglers' Island, together with a couple of cannon, for which, however, they had no use, as they found the nest empty, their birds flown.

Biddle was sent back to England in the same vessel with Burton, who shortly after his arrival was put on trial. He made a clean breast of it, showing that Biddle had connived at his wrong-doing and had helped conceal it, the result of which was that the detective served a term in prison.

At its expiration he resorted to the company of a low class of men, was caught while engaged in a burglarious enterprise and was transported for life.

In his bitterness of heart he frequently cursed Ned Nolan, the cause of that trip to America, which had ended in his downfall.

But his curses must have gone home to roost, for they never shadowed Ned's successful career through the long war, gaining himself a place in the hearts of the brave men of the time, and one occasion receiving what was and is to this day a treasured memory among his descendants—a few words of warm commendation from the lips of our noble Washington, the Father of our Country.

On the day when the news reached Boston of the Declaration of Independence, the Scud lay in a sheltered cove along the coast, while her commander was at Captain Gid's.

Here his mother found an asylum for years, visited at long intervals by her son.

Ned was met by Stella Arnow on the first occasion after his ravishing kiss, with glowing cheeks, but she did not then or ever after reprove him for the liberty he had taken, and, in fact, when Ned left this time she demurely upraised her lips to meet his.

"God bless him!" exclaimed Captain Gid. "I don't know of another man I'd rather see carry off my darling."

The long war ended in the way ordained by God, who had watched over and cared for the interests of the struggling colonies.

Ned flew to Boston, to the arms of his mother and Stella. It was the night of his arrival, and the happy family were gathered in the parlor.

The old times were talked of—the times when they were smugglers, when Ned first saw Stella in men's clothes, of her peril the night of her falling into the sea, of his own narrow escapes, when the name of Oscian was mentioned.

"What has become of Oscian, by the way?" asked Ned.

"I don't know," replied Captain Gid. "He disappeared shortly after the attack on the island. Pierre went with him; but wherever they were, it was not to be idle."

"I believe you," said Ned. "He was a strange fellow. I was always more than half afraid of him."

"So were a great many," observed the captain, "and not without reason, either, for he possessed many strange powers."

"Hadn't he something to do with the 'mystery of the light-house,' as it's called?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"All I can tell you," said Captain Gid, "is that Oscian was a singularly gifted mesmerist and personally highly magnetic. His simple touch would thrill me, and I have seen him put people to sleep by merely looking at them."

"Faith," ejaculated Ned, using his old Irish mannerism for the first in some time, "he struck me as being in league with the Old Boy himself."

"No, it was simply and purely magnetism or mesmerism—only he can ever explain the 'mystery of the lighthouse' fully, but no doubt it was due to the exercise of his strange powers."

"And how did he escape from the English guards that night? What is the explanation of his disappearing 'mid fire and smoke?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Captain Gid. "That was rich—rich! He gained quite a reputation by it, too. Why, it was simply this: He walked around the room a number of times, holding his powder-flask behind him, and making serpentine trains all over the floor. When he had done, he fell down, touched his hot cigar to the powder, and, of course, it went hissing and burning in and out and between their very feet. While the room was filled with smoke he flung himself through the window, and half an hour afterward was in this very room."

At the recollection of it Captain Gid laid back in his chair and his merry laughter was ringing through the apartment, when the servant ushered in—Oscian and Pierre.

The former was pale as death and quite emaciated, and but for Pierre's assistance could not have stood on his feet.

With a wan smile he sank into a chair and extended his hand to take that proffered by Captain Gid, as well as Ned's.

"I've heard of you," he said, with a look of approbation. "You did well—my trust was well-founded. All honor to Ireland and Irishmen."

It was very clear that Oscian had not long to live, and they tenderly laid him upon a downy bed and used him devotedly: Pierre never left his side.

One day he seemed a little stronger, and when they were all gathered beside him he suddenly said:

"You do not think we were idle because you did not see us, do you, Captain Gid?"

"No."

"We were not!" exclaimed Oscian, his eyes flashing with some of their old, peculiar light.

"Did you ever know, Captain Gid, why we hated the English so?"

"No."

"Well, you have heard of that disgraceful blot in their national history when they attacked a defenseless French settlement and to break it up more effectually carried away their prisoners, broke up families, and scattered them to the four winds of heaven. My forefathers were among that number, and to that day I trace my father's death and my mother's. Pierre and I met beside the body of our dead father and swore to avenge his death, and—we have done it."

Oscian sank back, exhausted, and a pallor began to overspread his face, and they saw that his strength had been fictitious, and that he was nearing the end.

He knew it, too.

"Good-by, and God bless you all!" he said, weakly, closing his eyes.

As they watched him they seemed to see or did see sparks of fire leave the tips of his fingers. Presently it darted from his face and hair, and then, suddenly—was gone.

They bent closer and found that he was dead.

Though the sparks were a mystery to them, we, of the present day, can account for them. Oscian had been highly charged with electricity—who knows but that his mesmeric power was in some measure due to this?—and at the great change it fled from his body.

Pierre's sobs alone broke the solemn silence that followed, and flinging himself down on the bed, he kissed the now lifeless lips.

His face was stern and fixed when he raised himself.

"Leave me alone with my dead!" he mournfully said, and they respected his wish.

Half an hour later the report of a pistol shot rang through the house.

Hurrying upstairs they found Pierre stretched across the body of Oscian.

Though dying, he was not yet dead, and raising himself as they entered, he turned his mournful eyes on them.

"What have you done?" exclaimed Captain Gid.

A melancholy smile hovered around the halfbreed's mouth, as he replied, brokenly, with great effort:

"Forgive me that it is done beneath your roof, but together we lived for one purpose in common. That has been accomplished. Companions in life, let us not be separated in death."

His head sank until it rested on Oscian's breast, and all became solemnly silent. They glided forward to raise him up, but Pierre had already crossed the dark chasm and joined his brother on the other shore.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

The treaty of peace was signed, and thus Great Britain officially recognized the thirteen colonies as free and independent States.

Ned's first care was to become a citizen of the country by adoption, to secure its protection.

He then wrote to his old home to the proper authorities, and stated his willingness to return and stand trial on the charge of killing the Marquis of Kerry.

His story had reached the ears of many prominent men, some of whom visited him and assured him of their personal protection, while others wrote him to the same effect.

The reply was received in due time, accepting his proposition, and he and his mother at once made preparations for his return to Ireland.

"Don't go," pleaded Stella, with a distressed face, when she heard of it.

"I must, darlint," said Ned. "With that charge hanging over my head I would never be a free man. To go willingly is all in me favor, and they have the right to take me back if they wish, which would count against me on the trial if they did. No—no, mavourneen, 'tis best so."

"But—but——" stammered Stella, "you will be all alone there."

"Whisht now, won't I have me mother? It won't be for long, Stella, and we'll be married the day I get back."

"You are determined to go, I see," said Stella.

"I am."

"Then I will go with you."

"What?"

"As your wife."

"Hurroo!" cried Ned, impulsively, and broke into a genuine old Irish jig; then, pausing suddenly and clasping a rosy cheek with either hand, he said: "Ye'd better not, Stella; it may not be very pleasant for you, and—and—there's a chance of the jury thinking differently about the matter from what I do."

"I'm going, nevertheless," she said, firmly.

And Captain Gid, with a rueful visage when he heard of it, repeated the old saying:

"When a woman says she will, she will,

You may depend on't;

And when she says she won't, she won't—

And there's an end on't."

It was a very quiet little wedding that took place the day the vessel was to leave; but some unforeseen accident prevented her going, and finally it was decided that she was not to go at all, so it was really six months after their marriage ere the blue shores of America sank below the horizon as they stood on the vessel's deck, straining their eyes to keep it in sight as long as possible.

Going to Europe in those days was not what it is now; at the present time we expect to go there in less than a week; then, four weeks or even five or six was considered a good run.

It took them nearly ten weeks to reach Ned's old home.

Then there was some delay about the commencing of the trial, and it was fully three months more when Ned, pale-faced but firm, stood proudly up to hear the result of the trial.

Alone, friendless, it must have gone against him; but surrounded by great influence, the adopted child of a powerful republic, they were compelled to deal justly by him.

The evidence was spoken of at length.

The Marquis of Kerry had been anything but a moral man; he had been a bad man in many ways. Mrs. Nolan was a widow, alone, unprotected save by her son. The dead marquis had called on the lady, and finding her alone, had grossly insulted her, when Ned chanced to come in. In a perfectly natural rage he had struck down the nobleman, who died from the effects of the blow. The provocation had been great, the judge believed the act justifiable, therefore the verdict was—

"Not guilty!"

Ned hurried home, elated beyond measure, and dashing upstairs, burst into his wife's room, exclaiming:

"It's all over. I'm a free man!"

They remained in the place some time, and by order of the court the property, which had been confiscated after his mother's departure for America, was returned.

Disposing of it to good advantage, they returned to Boston, and, with Ned's mother and Stella's father and mother, they lived happily for many years, surrounded by a family of little Nolans.

[THE END.]

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